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A WINTER IN THE CITY OF PLEASURE;

OR,

LIFE ON THE LOWER DANUBE.



A

WINTER IN THE CITY OF PLEASURE;

OR,

LIFE ON THE LOWER DANUBE.

BY

FLORENCE K. BERGER.

“LES FRUITS SANS SAVEUR, LES FLEURS SANS ODEUR”



LONDON :
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1877.

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To

THE HON. J. B. VIVIAN,

H.B.M. LATE DIPLOMATIC AGENT AND CONSUL-GENERAL
AT BUCHAREST,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY KINDNESSES,

These Sketches are Inscribed,

BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON, *January*, 1877.

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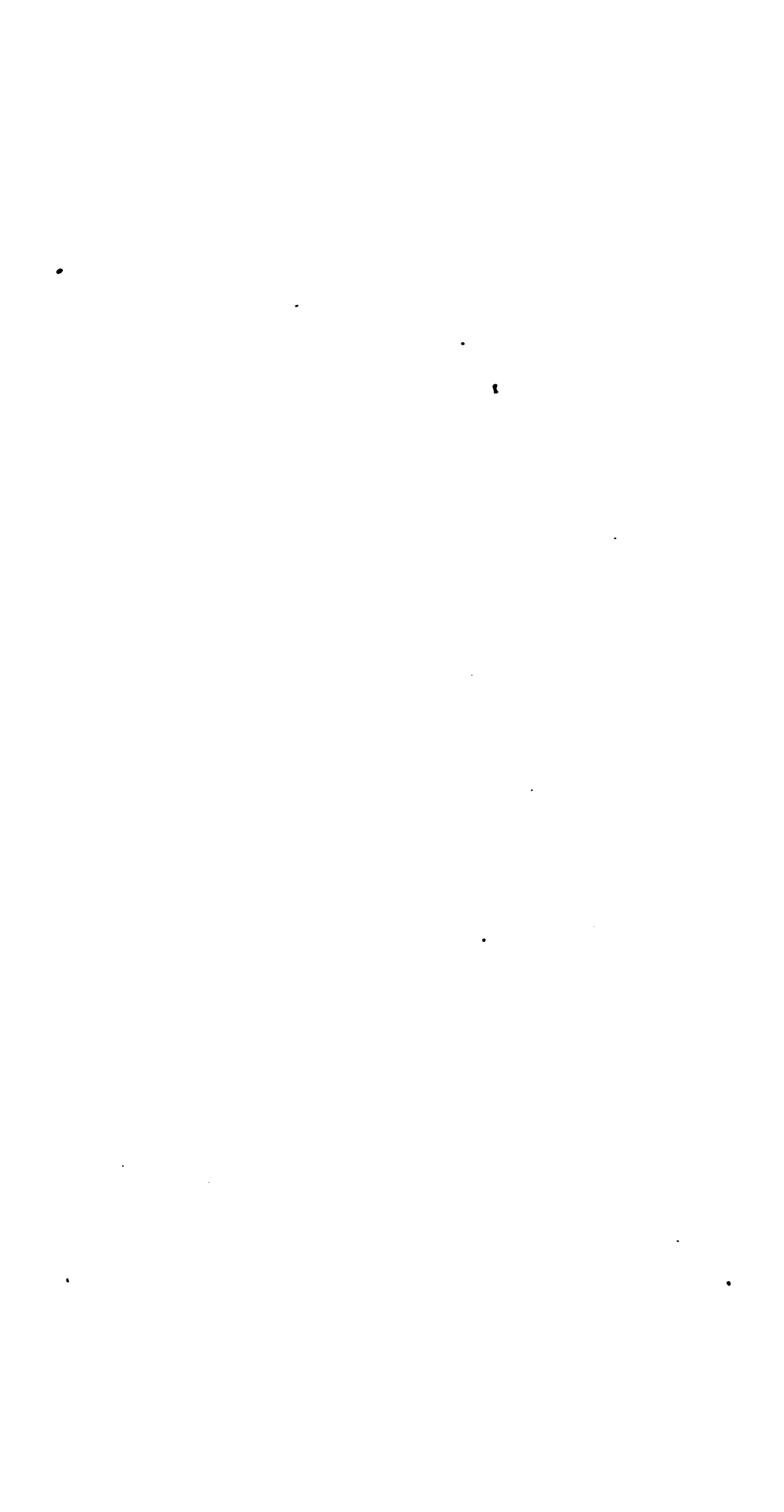


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DOWN THE DANUBE.







DOWN THE DANUBE.

(FROM PESTH TO GIURGEVO.)

A ROOM on the first floor of the Grand Hôtel Hungaria. Sofas and chairs are littered with the paraphernalia of travel, belonging to the four scarcely-awakened *voyageurs*, who have just finished a hasty breakfast. The timepiece, ornamented by the simpering bust of a nymph in bronze, is rapping out six silvery strokes; and the morning mist is slowly rising from the river and creeping up the opposite heights of Buda, till the old yellow castle seems to be hanging out of the clouds.

Madame is yawning noiselessly behind her little gloved hand; the Major, with his foot up on a chair, is fastening his boots by the aid of a

piece of string, and muttering something not loud, but deep, about a missing button-hook ; Jack is calling for another bottle of Tokay, " the same as we had yesterday, you know !" to put in his valise ; and we are lazily shaking ourselves into a sealskin outer garment, the approved fashion of Count D'Orsay.

Porters knock, enter, and luggage disappears. Our friend the waiter whisks in trim and wide-awake, with his hair already curled—a pale young man with light eyebrows and no discoverable nationality. In whatever language we put him questions, he always replies with prompt correctness, and we have a haunting suspicion that if we were to ask him for soda-water in Telagoo, or for a warming-pan in the dialect of the Caribbees, he would respond as usual in the very best native accent.

" *Le bateau vous attend, messieurs !*" he says, popping two men into their greatcoats in the twinkling of a bed-post.

We go down the broad stairs of this huge stone khan, with the Rembrandt portraits of the

beauties of Pesth smiling upon us from the walls, for the last time. We all stop, as if by mutual consent, for a peep through the window that overlooks the paven court, with its glass roof like a giant conservatory, its forest of broad-leaved plants, its gleaming statues peeping shyly out from the green foliage, and its multitude of little round snowy-damasked tables dotting the dark tessellated floor. Scene of many pleasant revels — of many vows of friendship exchanged over bumpers of Carlovitzer or Vöslauer—of many melting glances shot across the grape-dishes and the slender glasses shining with luscious, ambrosial Tokay ; our hearts are full of sadness as we bid thee adieu ! Here has reigned the mirth and freedom of perfect fellowship, the gaiety that is born of an easy conscience and a genial soul ; and here, too, has re-echoed that most charming of all music, the laughter of a pretty woman.

We shall not easily forget those long nights after the opera or the ball, when we supped at our own particular table, snugly ensconced behind

the myrtle-trees and the palms, while we lent a fascinated ear to the brilliant desultory talk, or listened to the band as it broke into one of the wild national *csárdás*, or the vivacious strains of Strauss's latest valse, that, like the tune brought out of the Jew's fiddle in the German child-story, made the soles of your feet begin to tingle as you moved them restlessly up and down, preparatory to making a start, and footing it with the best.

We cross the quay, and board the Austrian steamer that is to bear us towards Bucharest, the city of peace, the city of pleasure, that capital of almost pagan licentiousness, where the altar of Our Lady of Pain is besieged by eager worshippers, and where the rites of Cotytto go merrily forward from sunset to sundawn !

We turn into our private cabin on deck, with window-shutters against the eye of indiscretion, pearl-grey walls like a lady's *boudoir*, and comfortable green velvet lounges that are destined to serve some of us for beds the next two or three nights to come. Now we are *chez nous* as completely as if we were in our own little shabby

den, redolent of the fumes of honeydew and cavendish, in our own little stucco villa on the heights of Hampstead or Highgate. Not one of the ship's company, not even the dapper young captain himself, dares lay a finger upon the knob of this sacred door. If any high-booted brandenburgerd Magyar, or red-fezzed, baggy-breeched Bulgarian, were to take a freak into his head to cross this inviolate threshold, we should be justified in executing summary vengeance upon the interloper and pitching him out neck and heels.

Here we may sing comic songs, tell stories after the fashion of the discreet Scheherezade, read clear-typed Tauchnitz novels or frivolous French romances, play *lansquenets* or transatlantic poker, or the *schtoss* of Russland; drink *tchai* made in tiny teapots with silver nosebags, and served up with white rum and thin slices of lemon, or poison ourselves with native *slitgovitz*, and nobody can have a word to say.

What cosy floating houses are these Danube steamboats! What dreamy, idyllic hours you

pass stretched out at full length upon the soft velvet cushions of the saloon, fluttering the leaves of the book you do not even pretend to read, while the ever-changing panorama glides slowly by the little square windows, and the lazy lapping of the water against the vessel's sides has a drowsy, lethargic effect upon you, predisposed as you are to slumber, so that you fall into as deep and visionless a sleep as though you had drained a goblet of drowsy hemlock or fell mandragora.

Did ever cutlets look and taste like these cutlets that the steward brings out of the liliputian kitchen on deck and puts down before you flanked by a bottle of red Hungarian wine, while the agreeable odour penetrates your nostrils, making you yawn, and stir, and open your eyes, and stare to find that you are called upon to eat again ! What are all the Alphonses, and Narcisses, and Isidors of the Parisian restaurants, compared to the skill of this Austrian *Köchin* who turns out her sausages and *Sauerkraut* fit for the festive board of a live *Gross-Herzog*.

A bluff, uncouth monster is the conven-




tional ship's commander, with his Spartan brevity, his rough seafaring dress, and his unpleasant complexion that oceans of Kalydor would have no effect upon, compared to this compact little man in well-fitting clothes and polished boots, with his smooth peachy cheeks and light blue eyes, who lifts a neat grey-gloved finger to the gold band of his flat cap, as he smilingly bids us a good-morrow.

A retired conservatory, when all the guests are dancing ; the back of an opera-box, when the sleepy *chaperone's* plumes nod over her harmonious nose ; the square-garden, when all the neighbours are out of town ; the box-seat of a four-in-hand, when one's temporal guardians are shut up safe inside—all these are excellent places for the pursuit of that attractive game, Flirtation. But if any overworked matron sees the end of the season approaching, and feels that her sleepless nights and laborious days have all been spent in vain ; if supercilious elder sons still hold aloof, and shy younger sons fight shyer yet ; if Miss Laura, and Miss Charlotte, and Miss Amelia have

rinked at Prince's, waltzed at Guildhall, cantered down the Lady's Mile, croqueted on every suburban lawn, sat out cricket-matches at Lord's and pigeon-slaughters at Hurlingham under a broiling summer-sun, have dressed, dined, and thumped all the tune out of the drawing-room Erard, and are nevertheless Miss Laura, Miss Charlotte, and Miss Amelia still, let their anxious Mater not despair. Let her call to Justine the *femme de chambre*, and to Mary the housemaid, and bid them help her to pack the travelling trunks for the Lower Danube. And if her girls be only decently good-looking, and know how to play their cards well, each blushing virgin who steps fancy free upon the planks of the steamer at Buda-Pesth, will not reach the Soulina without being that sweetest of all spectacles, an affianced bride.

For the "*Donau Dampfschiffahrt Gesellschaft*" has lent itself to a diabolical scheme. These luxurious, roomy boats, with their rich upholstery, their snowy awnings, and the feeling of false security that they inspire by their air of




home-like comfort, are only so many artfully designed man-traps, which have been the ruin of scores upon scores of feeble bachelors. What impressionable mortal, shut up with one woman for four or five days, and seeing her under every possible circumstance of advantage, but would at last reach such a stage of spooniness and sentimentalism that it would require only a few judicious tugs at the line for the fair angler to bring her prize right to land?

When the breeze blows freshly on the upper deck, ruffling smooth heads of hair, and bringing roses to pale cheeks, and a brighter light into bright eyes, what plain woman does not seem handsome? Lingering in the gorgeous glories of sunset, when the boat is floating passively down the reflecting tides, and the wild cranes and storks disturbed by the occasional paddle of the wheels, rise up from their grotesque attitude on the marshy islets and fly off to the refuge of the shore, what heart does not melt into a dangerous softness before the witching beauty of those ever-changing clouds, that see

themselves in the waveless water as in a polished mirror, while the shades of night are already gathering in the distance over the silent, melancholy hills? Or when by the veiled lamp-light in the spacious cabin, one watches a blooming damsel reclining upon many cushions like an Odalisque, and softly stirring her after-dinner tea, while she speaks in those low subdued accents in which the merest commonplaces have an air of being the most secret and flattering confidences, what male creature of woman born but finds thoughts creeping into his head that had a great deal better be out?

Happily for us, there are no such temptations on board. This is not the time for tourists, and none of our female passengers would have perverted the judgment of Paris, or given rise to a new Iliad.

There is a German spinster, in spectacles and a brown mushroom hat, who wanders about disconsolately with a camp-stool, and has the same horror of tobacco-smoke that a mad dog has of water; a big matron entirely devoid of



angles, with five chubby children, all apparently of the same age ; and a Viennese lady with none of the proverbial charms of her fellow-citizenesses, returning to the East, accompanied by her husband, an ambassador's secretary, who constitute our trio of Graces.

The men are more numerous. Two or three vice-consuls, going back to the Orient, after passing their hardly-earned holidays among the green hills of Baden, or at the gay baths of Marienbad ; a fair sprinkling of men of business, who are always confabulating together in low voices ; German, Austrian, Greek, and Galician Jews, who have much ornament and little linen, and whose hands are always in their pockets rattling their coin ; Hungarian lords of the soil, bound for their country abodes near the river-stations ; dark-eyed, fur-pelished Roumanian spendthrifts, who have scattered to their last ducat in Paris or Vienna, and are now *en route* for home to vegetate in their windy, broken-down, half-empty *maisons de campagne*, until the tithes and the dividends again fall due, and they can go

up to the capital for another brief spell of luxury and extravagance.

There is also an individual who takes our fancy immensely, a commanding-looking man in the prime of life, who wears a long black clerical-looking coat and blue spectacles, and who paces the deck continually, reading from a little book. Sometimes he carries a white umbrella and has a Scotch cap; at others, a beaver hat with red cord and tassels and violet gloves. We find out afterwards that he is a Catholic bishop, and a Russian prince to boot, and that he is a courteous, amiable gentleman, with every European language at the tip of his tongue, and as much learning as would go to the making of a hundred doctors of the Sorbonne under the thick brown hair, not a thread of which is grey.

Absolutely nothing could be more monotonous than this first day "*an der schönen blauen Donau*." Village succeeds village and pampas succeed pampas, while marshy tracts, submerged in spring, border the water-side. We come to wild, desolate regions, attractive only to the soul

of a Magyar, who sees here his classical land, his plains of Troy, his vale of Tempé. For it was about these desert fastnesses that Attila, the victorious Hun, held his savage court, surrounded by his barbarian followers, clad in garments and caps of skins, the nomad progenitors of the poor Hungarian shepherds who wander through the grass to-day, with long loose hair and mantle of sheep's-wool. We pace the deck, and lounge in the cabin, and pet the black lamb, shut up in a big cage on board, who bleats plaintively from time to time, and thrusts his nose insinuatingly between the wooden bars to be fed with *kuchen*. We dine, and play dominoes, and go to bed early, with the silvery moonlight streaming through the unclosed shutters, and the long-drawn-out kiss of the rippling wavelets soothing us to sleep.

The next day is as delightfully uneventful and as dreamily happy, as the one that went before it. The banks are still tame, and flat, and the scenery offers no special feature of interest. We pass by fort and town celebrated in the wars of Solyman and the Magyars ; and steam between the hills of

Sclavonia on the one side, and the rich plains of the Temesvár-Banat on the other, which is the granary of Central Europe.

It is night when our paddle-wheels stop, and we reach Semlin. We come out of our snug little cabin and go up on deck, and leave the steamer for a ramble, as the captain intends coaling here, and will stay until morning. We should like to visit the *Platz-Commandant*—an Austrian colonel who has charge of this, the most important military station in South Sclavonia, and whose courtesy on a former occasion when we were bound for Belgrade, and had neglected to provide ourselves with passports, we still remember with gratitude. But the hour forbids it. Our colonel is, doubtless, long ere this safe between the sheets, and forgetting in the friendly arms of the Dream-God, the dreary, monotonous round of his daily life of exile in this Austrian Siberia. And when we glance at the lonely, unlighted path to the town, that stretches out between two gloomy lines of poplar-trees, and is lost in the pitchy darkness, we are rather glad to be


released from the necessity of traversing such an uninviting road, especially as the revolvers are down in the cabin, and our purses are in our pockets. So we moon about under the oil-lamps that are shedding their festive radiance upon the busy throng, with all the cheerful brilliancy of so many farthing rushlights, and watch the coaling of the vessel.

What a wild, outlandish scene! Would you not think yourself in Pandemonium or the Inferno of Dante Alighieri? Brown men and women, grim and nearly naked, rush rapidly by in a long string, trundling wheelbarrows full of coal down a narrow plank that stretches on to the deck, chanting, as they run and patter their bare feet, a barbaric chorus, in harsh, discordant voices. The dim rays of the lamps fall upon their flashing eyes, their long black matted hair, and dusky, gleaming limbs, while sudden screeches of shrill laughter startle the brooding silence of the night. The lurid, red reflections from the open fires of the engine-room stream athwart the ebon darkness, and discover these strange, weird

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figures flitting hither and thither about the deck, emptying their loads, one after another, with the rapidity of lightning, and disappearing again, swallowed up in the dense obscurity, still incited to fresh exertions by the music of the barbaric chant, that rises higher and wilder over the quiet tranquil flow of old Danubius, rolling down towards the distant Euxine. When we fall asleep to-night on one of the cushions of the saloon, we shall dream of these brown, honest creatures, who are shouting and singing, out of pure gladness of heart, because they are going to earn a few coppers for brandy and tobacco, and they will be turned into yelling, exultant imps of darkness, who are triumphantly bringing up fresh fuel to feed the fierce flames of Hades !

We leave Semlin in all the tranquil beauty of the early dawn. We watch dear old Belgrade in the distance, across the Save, with its grey, forbidding fortress fronting the river, and its one tall minaret that dominates the ruined houses and deserted shops of the once populous Turkish quarter. In that stronghold of the ousted



Moslem still lies one of their dead saints, wrapped up in a coarse canvas shroud, and locked in a pent-house with barred windows. We remember wandering about one spring morning in the crumbling *enceinte* of this formerly impregnable citadel, and coming upon a grated casement that seemed to enclose a mystery. We looked through the dirty, obscured glass, and dimly made out a stiff, stark, mummified figure, upon which the dust and mildew of years and years rested like another winding-sheet, and wondered how the dead man could lie so quiet, when the heavy tramp of the Serb sentinel, reverberating among the ruins, marked how the sway of the fierce Osmanli had been banished thence, perchance for ever !

Belgrade, the vantage-ground of combats and sieges, fades away over the placid water in the soft, pearly sky. We recline lazily on the upper-deck, with the blue smoke of our cigarettes perfuming the cool morning air, watching the scenery, that for the first time since we embarked at Pesth becomes mountainous and interesting.

Rugged hills, forerunners of the Balkans and the Carpathians, rise up either side, and between them the river flows broadly on towards the great Roumanian plains. A few hours of the *dolce far niente*; a few pages of Octave Feuillet; and a few tiny papers full of golden Latakia, bring us to Basiasch, where the rail comes to the water's edge.

We pick up a few passengers who have come by train from Pesth, and so avoided the most wearisome part of the Danube. We notice mine host of the "*Quatre Bateaux à Vapeur*," with his pursy figure and smooth bald head, standing on the terrace of his dining-room, on the look-out for such hungry travellers as a beneficent Providence may have sent him. We wave him an amiable salute, to which he responds by a profusion of graceful bows and sweeps of the white dinner-*napkin* which he holds in his hand; for is not yonder fat, German-speaking Falstaff one of our most cherished friends, the apple of our eye, the prince of innkeepers, and the very embodiment of large-hearted hospitality? How many times has


he not brought us our egg-soup with his own nimble fingers, and lighted up the family *flambeaux* in our honour in that little, low, dark room, with its framed engravings of French *grisettes* and the Hungarian patriots of '49 !

Now, after awhile, our steamer rushes into the most magnificent gorge of Europe, perhaps even of the whole world. Here, as if in giant-anger, the grizzly-headed mountains threaten each other across the foaming torrent ; while there they smile over embosomed lakes from which there seems no possible egress. In one place the eye rests delighted upon idyllic vistas and soft emerald-swarded lone retreats, fit to echo to the music of Arcadian shepherds' pipes, or the love-talk of Perdita and Florimel ; and in another, it meets with the frowning semblance of cathedral-tower and gloomy battlement. Now we dart down narrow foam-crested rapids, like an Indian canoe upon a Canadian river, and then we float calmly away upon a tideless surface between retreating heights that slope off on either hand.

We get to Orsova, where we have to change

boats. We bid farewell to our gay little captain, whose unruffled amiability and unflagging courtesy have done so much towards making the long hours go lightly by. We shake hands all round, and part with many mutual expressions of regret, sincere at least on our side. We scramble through the custom-house, and reach the other vessel that is waiting for us with her steam already up. And as we mount the steep stairs leading to the upper deck, our eyes fall upon one of the ship's officers whom we are destined never to forget.

What words can describe thee, Gyp, most amiable of terriers, with thy silky iron-grey hair falling on thy forehead like a lady's, and partially concealing the softest, darkest, and most confiding eyes that ever looked into the face of man for protection—thy hind-quarters closely shaven like a lion, and the brass collar round thy neck whose legend tells that thou belongest to the young captain over yonder, reading a novel with his face bent over his book ! What pen can depict thee, standing upon the bridge in place of thy master,



scanning with thy quick glance the in-coming passengers, and sometimes giving vent to a short bark of welcome at the sight of a countenance which pleased thee ? In travel one makes many friendships that are destined not to survive the hour, but we shall long remember thee our affectionate four-footed fellow-voyager on board that river-boat !

Before evening we come to Turnu-Severin, and then the world-renowned ruins of the Roman Bridge we have lingered in the open air to see again—the colossal Bridge that, according to Marsigli, measured three thousand feet in length. The current at this point, where the wide lake-like area of the river converges suddenly into a narrow bed between high mountain summits, runs slowly and regularly. As we drift over the smooth tides, and by the memento cut in the living rock, still recording the erection of Trajan's stupendous work that Hadrian threw down stone by stone, we build up again in imagination that noblest structure of antiquity in this part of the world, a portion of which has defied the

ice and floods of seventeen centuries. By the changing colours of the sunset-clouds we see the Bridge of Trajan, as it rose from the plan of Apollodorus of Damascus. We see the mighty arches, a hundred feet across, supported by trunculated piers, sixty feet wide and a hundred and fifty feet in height, spanning the breadth of the river, and upholding the great footway that communicates shore with shore. There are the two wide squares at either end, where the Emperor marshals his sandalled warriors before he goes to quell the revolt of the turbulent barbarians. The rushing of the waters down from the Iron Gates seems almost like the tramp of distant legions, and the murmuring voices of evening waking along the shore sound like the subdued hum from a populous encampment.

Early on deck the next morning, we see the sun rising above the Roumanian hills, and nothing but mountains whichever way we turn. On the right are the Balkans, their sharp outlines clear against the sky, as they bend away from


the Iron Gates towards the Black Sea, a continuous chain of forest-capped giants—and at the north rise the towering Carpathians, surpassing their rivals in hoary magnificence. Two lofty ridges that enclose Bulgaria and Roumania, forming a mighty amphitheatre in which successive hordes of barbarians first appeared on the stage of Europe to open the ever-changing scenes of a bloody drama. It was on these plains of the Lower Danube that the vast armies of Cyrus melted like snow before the arrows of the Scythians—here Alexander the Great fought with the fierce barbarians—and here, in later days, thousands upon thousands of human bodies went to enrich the soil with their bones, in the wars between the Crescent and the Cross.

Lower down, the Danube, having received the great rivers of Hungary, and lashed with its myriad streams the Tyrolean and Norican Alps, rests below the Iron Gates like a tired giant, falling away to the ocean, a broad, silent, and majestic river.

As we advance the mountains gradually recede,

and the Roumanian shore becomes low, and sandy, and sterile, with little brown hills here and there, dotted with scanty verdure. Cetate and its dreary, desolate surrounding region; Widdin with its defiant fortifications; and then towards evening again the first few red-roofed, peaceful Bulgarian villages, nestling among the trees, almost like the homes of English cottagers, albeit the slender minarets pointing up their white fingers into the darkening heaven, betray that we are in the neighbourhood of another religion and of other laws.

Some Turkish ladies come on board at Nicopolis the next morning—six of them escorted by *Monsieur le Mari*, who is to the life the very rampageous Turk of our childhood (though we do not see the broad-bladed scimitar, nor the crescented, many-folded turban), whom we were wont to purchase for the small consideration of one half-penny on a coarsely-executed sheet of popular characters, in company with Rob Roy, Jack Shephard, Kean as Hamlet, and our gracious sovereign, Queen Victoria. The




women look like so many spectres, with their heads and necks swathed in white muslin bandages drawn over the mouth, and leaving only the eyes and nose visible, and give us quite an uncomfortable feeling as they silently glide through the midst of the passengers to an unfrequented part of the steamer, where they proceed to squat down all a-row on the bare boards in the narrow passage between the windows of the saloon and the sides of the vessel.

We watch them, leaning above their heads over the rails of the upper deck, as they begin to chatter, and giggle, and roll their tapering cigarettes with finger-nails disfigured by dyed patches of henna, that no longer rosy-red are turning a horrible black. They are all old and ugly, these waddling, trousered ladies—all, with one exception, whom we presume to be the latest weakness of the scowling old Bluebeard who sits narrowly watching his seraglio, while he puffs away at a long silver-mounted pipe, dangling his fat, worsted-stockinged legs against the bench.

The pretty Fatima, or Zuleika, or whatever her name may be, is evidently a coquette, and not averse even to the admiration of a Giaour; for, under pretence of re-arranging her headdress, she pulls the disfiguring bands completely aside and smiles at us with the tiniest mouth in the world, while she darts, oh! such a wicked look out of the corner of her long dark eyes streaked about with lines of kohl! She is really very attractive, although her round little face is daubed all over like a white-washed wall, and we look unutterable things at the ugly old sensualist who could not be contented with the society of five quiet elderly ladies of his own age, but must needs be taking a giddy young minx, like his own grand-daughter, to tweak his beard and play old gooseberry with his cash-box!

The day rolls on in the same easy uneventful way as the preceding ones. We begin to believe that the planks of this steamer are our local habitation, and that we are destined to spend the remainder of our lives in going up and down the Danube, and taking coffee with the captain. We




stop at many stations along the Roumanian bank, where we take up peasants in sheepskin *jubas*, lambswool Phrygian caps, long hair falling over their shoulders, and classic Roman profiles ; popas in the high black cap and long gown of the Greek Church, with moustaches and beards, and, for the most part, a commanding air, as these priests are chosen, not for their mental qualities (they are as ignorant as the peasants who kneel to them and kiss their hands), but for the appearance they present ; and market-women with short thick petticoats, men's boots, and coloured handkerchiefs over their heads, who come on board with numbers of unfortunate fowls tied together by the legs, swung over their shoulders heads downwards. On the Bulgarian side we pick up many grave personages in red fezzes, and a few men of a commoner class who have turbans over their shaven crowns. At last we come to Rustchuk, where fez and turban both leave us ; and then we steam slowly across the river from the Bulgarian to the Roumanian side, threading our cautious way between the woody islets, and

frightening the graceful, long-legged storks as they are making their evening toilets on the marshy, swampy shores.

Here is Giurgiu, with its open, square, and high clock-tower, and here it is that we descend. After a lot of mutual hand-shaking and bowing with our fellow-passengers, who are going to stations farther east, and a delirious hug to Gyp, who bears the parting with mournful equanimity, and seems to wish us to understand that if duty did not bid him stick close to the vessel and his master, he would willingly follow our fortunes, we gather up all our belongings and step on Roumanian soil.

In another hour we are whirling along the railway that will bring us to Bucharest by dinner-time. Seven years ago, what a frightful journey this used to be from the river-coast to the capital ! A wooden *carutza*, without a single nail or the ghost of a spring, bumping up hill and down dale ; a herd of shaggy animals harnessed with ropes ; yelling post-boys with as little regard for their passengers' necks as for their own ; and



clouds of dust that nearly choked you outright, were the miseries you had to endure for eight or nine hours. And if it happened to be winter, your sledge might be buried by the snow-storm—your horses fall down a ravine—packs of starving wolves might pursue you at full cry—or you might perhaps be weather-bound by the furious elements in a little roadside post-house for two or three days, with no brandy in the flask and nothing but Indian corn to eat.

So, as we wrap ourselves up in our rugs and watch the trees and hovels swiftly receding from our gaze, we murmur a blessing upon the name of George Stephenson.







BUCHAREST.







BUCHAREST.

BUCHAREST is Bucharest, and therefore is not in the least like any other place in the world. Just as a Roumanian is a Roumanian, without a shadow of resemblance to a Turk, a Bosnian, a Galician, a Serb, a Montenegrin, or a Greek.

It is not the East, still less the West. You see that directly, for though your banker gives you *liras* against your letter of credit, you look round in vain for the minarets and the veiled women in white cerecloths. It is neither flesh, nor fowl, nor good red-herring. You can drink *braga* like a Bulgarian, sherbet like a Mussulman, beer like a German student, or *petit Bordeaux* like a Paris *bourgeois*. You can eat your dinner

lying down on a sofa, with your repast on a little round, low Turkish table, not a span high, or you can banquet off mahogany on castors. You can sup off Turkish *haliske*, or Russian *pilaff*, or Hungarian *paprica*, or even the *biftecks saignants* of "Albion the Perfidious." You can curl yourself upon a divan in a delightful, Bohemian sort of way, or you can go to bed in sober, decorous fashion between a pair of sheets, with an eider-down quilt and a brass foot-rail. You may have your shaving-water brought by a dapper French *garçon*, or a lumpish Swiss *Kellner*, or a glittering Albanian, or a gold-eared Hungarian *rendaş*, or even by a *Jäger* in hunting clothes and a plume of white feathers, like his Serene Highness the Grand Duke of Katzenbuckel. If you go out in your elegant carriage that would do credit to the Bois, your horses can stumble knee-deep into crevasses that yawn in the roadway and play the very mischief with your patent springs. If you become tired of being jolted, and thumped, and bumped about, and are rash enough to get out and walk, you can sink over the tops of your

lacquered boots in white dust, or snow, or slush, or mud, according to the time of year. You may keep up a polyglot conversation in your salon in a dozen different languages, for here are people of all nationalities, from the linguistic Muscovite to the 'cute American, from the olive-tinted Greek to the light-haired Teuton; or you may patter Romany with the gipsies around their camp-fires. You may lose a year's income over a post-prandial *bac de santé* or you may play at *bésique* with your fellow-countryman for love and a *dulceatza*.

Il y en a pour tous les goûts. Life in Bucharest is facile, and is made up of the customs of many lands.

Here, in this ancient capital of Phanariot and Hospodar, is sounded the *fin-mot* of Western civilisation, and the neophyte gets his first initiatory plunge into Oriental sloth, and effeminate luxuriousness. An idle, gay, monotonous city, with rudely-paven streets that are a martyrdom to man and beast, and not the faintest sign of intellectual life stirring on the surface of society.


There are a hundred tailors' shops and hairdressers' saloons and *Magasins des Modes* for one bookseller's window. Young Roumania bejewels his fingers, and bedecks his person, and throws learning where Othello consigned physic, "to the dogs." And were you to enter that solitary library, you would see scores upon scores of those morbidly licentious novels that can only be engendered in the unhealthy brain of a Parisian who lives upon *absinthe*, and spends his leisure hours in the *Morgue*, for a single Goethe or Schiller, translated into Roumanian by some ambitious student hankering after better things.

Comparatively isolated as it is from the great highway that traverses the Continent from Paris to Stamboul, no traveller comes to Bucharest either out of curiosity or a desire for amusement. There are no temples as on the Acropolis; no ruins like the house of Pansa the *Ædile*; no palaces like the Pitti, and the Uffizzi, and the Farnese; no frescoes as in the Sistine Chapel; no perfect specimens of a lost art, as in the coloured windows of the Dom at Köln. There

are no opera-houses as on the Boulevard des Capucines and in the Opern-Ring ; no *cafés* as at Naples ; no bull-fights as at Seville ; no dancing dervishes as at Pera ; no skating-rinks and polo-clubs as in London. All the foreigners are engineers, or men of business, or connected with finance. The rich cosmopolite, and the idle proletarian, have no place among these working bees of the big hive, who toil and amass their yellow stores for happier days and brighter climates, while the drones are buzzing in the sunshine. What should they do to make the lagging hours gallop withal, in this town of one street, one theatre, one religion, and one idea ?

Paris is the never-to-be-lost-sight-of model that Bucharest holds up to herself.

There is a cross-road, a few hundred feet long, planted with little dwarf trees, very wide apart, that sicken and pine away, and absolutely refuse to take root, stifled as they are by whirling simoons of gritty dust, and parched with the unalleviated heat of a rainless sky. They droop about right and left in every stage of despondency,



and have to be propped up by poles, which the vagabond gipsies steal off with at nightfall to feed their blazing camp-fires. On either side are bare deserted places where the workmen pitch their rubbish, and a tumble-down shed where you can regale yourself with sugared cakes and native hard-bake, after coming from a sight of the swans and a rehearsal of a frogs' concert on the lake of Țismegiu. This is the Boulevard. In further imitation of modern Athens, the façade of the Opera-House has been furbished up with tablets, and wreaths, and rosettes painted to look like bronze, and the frontal has been surmounted by a huge gilt group. *Cafés chantants* multiply rapidly, and minor goddesses from the leafy shadows of the Champs Élysées, drift here from time to time, to interpret to the *caçiulas* and furbelisses the subtle mysteries of *la chansonette*. A fine time they have of it, these naughty night-ingales, with gold-rimmed *pince-nez* on their pert little noses, and ravishing many-buttoned *chaussures*! Bucharest sets its idol up on a pedestal, and makes sacrificial offerings of bonbons, and

bouquets, and pearl-grey Jouvins, and wastes a little fortune upon champagne, and courses on the Chaussée, until, presto! another wandering star appears above the horizon, and fickle youth whisks off in a twinkling, to lay his crackers and his compliments at the shrine of a new divinity.

The Roumanians are as mad about whatever comes from Paris, as the French were once with their brief fever of Anglomania, when Gavarni drew wonderful sketches of Lord Bouledog, in *cotelettes* and peg-top inexpressibles. The language of society is French, and the mother-tongue is relegated to swineherds and husbandmen. Most of the principal shopkeepers are from the land of *truffles* and *cognac*. They work from morning to night, and put money by with proverbial thrift, and live only for the time when they can cry "Eureka!" and empty the till for the last time, before driving to the hill-station at Filarète, and demanding a ticket for the beloved *patrie*, where they hope to spend their old age in planting little cabbages all of a row, and con-


cocting *pot-au-feu*. For your true-born Frenchman seriously believes that the sun only rises and sets over "the country of the good God;" acclimatizes himself nowhere in consequence, and would rather live up four pairs of stairs, in a back attic, in a dirty faubourg, with a *café* on one hand and a *traiteur* on the other, and a theatre within a stone's throw, than have apartments for nothing at La Granja or Miramar, with a dozen lackeys in court livery and a *chef de cuisine* with a red ribband in his buttonhole. If any one wishes to see Bucharest, let him call a *birja* and drive about till he is tired, which will be very soon—a *birja* that is in itself one of the wheels making the social machinery revolve with smoothness and precision. We often wonder what would come of it, if these indolent Roumanians (who will not walk the length of a room if they can help it) were to wake up one morning and find that the drivers had all struck, and that there were no carriages to take them to breakfast at the restaurant, or to the tailor's to try on their clothes. How they would shiver, and

shudder, and anathematise the relentless Russian Jehus, as they tripped gingerly over the muddy, greasy, roughly-laid flagstones, rolling and sliding at every step ! Bucharest without its *birje* would be like Venice without gondolas, or Cairo without donkeys, or the Desert without camels.

The architectural structure of the city admits of no classification. The unschooled fancy of the designer, ignorant of even the first rules of æsthetic art, has been carried out by the rude hands of the gipsy mason. Plaster mouldings in lavish profusion, blind-windows, and black water-pipes winding their serpentine length down the very front of the houses, are a few of these errors of taste whose name is legion.


Spired churches, capped by the ærial, glittering Greek cross, with gaudy paintings on their white-washed walls, and a general impression of unsubstantial newness, are thinly spread throughout the town.

Here and there one comes upon an ancient religious edifice (ancient in a comparative sense) with loopholes for murderous firearms, and a



stern air of business-like defence. For the sake of a few bricks, and a little mortar, these old church-fortresses, that have more than once kept the infidel at bay, and have done good service in their time, are left to crumble down into the dust ; and though their loss, archæologically speaking, is no loss at all, there is always something sad in the sight of a building rendered venerable by age, when it is allowed to drop away piece by piece, without the hand of man, whom it has sheltered and protected, being interposed to retard its ruin.

Most of the houses are built with a light covered-in gallery running all round the upper story, which serves the double purpose of keeping out the heat in summer and the cold in winter, and courtyards where the fig-tree spreads out its broad green fingers, the oleander rises thick in foliage, and the wild dogs turn in from the street to quarrel and fight. Everywhere around the unaccustomed eye is shocked by the most violent of contrasts—the extremes of painful freshness and dull decay ; of prodigal splendour and the misery




that is beyond shame ; of perfect taste and barbaric whimsicality. The flaunting mansion of a *nouveau riche*, whose name was unheard of yesterday, glistening with scarce-dried paint and gay with gilding and plaster-of-Paris ornament, encroaches upon the wild garden and dismantled ruins of some bankrupt Boyard's house, one for whose raiment the Jews have long ago cast lots, whose flocks and herds have passed away into the keeping of The Tribes, and whose bones are in all probability mouldering at Filarète. The *mahala* of the peasant, that is something between a pigsty, an Irish shanty, and an Esquimaux's hut, creeps up to the very gates of the palace, where sentries stand leaning on their muskets, and great personages go in and out. And the picture of sordid wretchedness, the peasant himself shuffles along in the gutter, narrowly escaping being overturned as the elegant patrician, in his Paris-built Victoria and costly pelisse of Siberian elk, whirls rapidly by, showering down a plentiful cascade of mud from his carriage-wheels.

Bucharest, the City of Vlad, the Devil, is not a

romantic capital. It is not even an interesting one. The artist looks vainly around him for some harmonious grouping to transfer to his canvas; the student for some precious record to invite his labours. The caricaturist, pencil in hand, may sketch some grim types of humanity from among these long-haired, sheepskin-mantled bullock-drivers, and these flashily-attired, dirty-looking children of Israel, who wear jewelled studs in linen a fortnight old, and rings upon their unwashed fingers. But the lover of the Beautiful must turn disappointed away. The twin sisters, Art and Poetry, are aliens in the land.

There are but few public buildings—the Arsenal, the Visterie, the Caisse de Dépôts et de Consignations, the Préfecture de Police, and some others. As nearly every fresh minister changes the *local* of his bureau, there are many institutions belonging to Government that have no fixed place of abode. The Academia, one of the latest and best of these edifices, built of stone, in a simple and solid style of architecture, is a great improvement upon the unsymmetrical and hetero-



geneous structures that abound in the city. It contains an embryo library, and a museum yet in its infancy. There are also classes organised within its walls, which is a step in the right direction. Museum, library, public instruction—these are very new words in this Eastern, Sleepy Hollow, where, thanks to the incursion of the stranger from the West, men are fast awakening from their lethargy, to find that society expects something more from them than how to spend and borrow like a Boyard.

The Garden of Çismegiu, that was a desolate, marshy place not half a century ago, when the fierce wolves prowled about in search of prey, and the peasant was afraid to venture abroad after nightfall, is one of the few spots within the city where one can see the green grass growing, and something like a smile upon the face of Nature. These acres, planted with the beech, the lilac, the poplar, and the yew, are the citizens' pleasure-ground—his *Volks-Garten*, his *Parc Monceau*, his *Buen Retiro*. Here he may roam at will without being hustled by the throng of vapid idlers, or

run down by a passing *birja*; and, if he be a poet, he may feed his imagination, starved and stultified within a narrow brick-and-mortar boundary, by watching the long flags that bend their heads all one way as the wind goes murmuring musically among them, and the motionless swans that rock lazily on the ruffled surface of the water. Out of the arid, deserted streets, where the heat-rays quiver against the white, glaring walls, and the fine dust introduces itself between your teeth and under your eyelids, and covers your garments with a gritty penetrating powder, you turn into this shady wilderness with a grateful heart. The thin twigs, however meagre their foliage, are some protection against the intolerable glare, and the parched herbage is softer than a Persian carpet to the lagging tread of tired feet. On a fine afternoon in early summer the benches of the *Grande Allée* swarm with the blind, the halt, and the lame, among the poor. Lazarus crawls out into the daylight, allured by the golden sunshine that finds its way into his mud-built hovel, and exposes his unsightly sores

to the beneficent beams whose warmth reaches him, tempered by an interlacing screen of verdure. The crippled mendicant lays aside his crutches, and watches with dull, lustreless eyes, the shifting shadows of the leaves as they dance upon the gravelled pathway. Groups of ragged figures, with brown chests and swarthy faces, squat about under the trees and eat their scanty meal. Stray curs, animated by the reckless, devil-may-care spirit of rampant vagrancy, chase each other with ardour round and round upon the soft greensward, forgetting even their hunger in the exciting fun. Squads of awkward recruits, the pick of the plough-tail, are drafted out of the barracks to go through all sorts of violent gymnastics on the broad, smooth walk; while the fussy subalterns strut up and down in all the pride of well-fitting tunics and long Hungarian boots, making the deep shores of the lake re-echo with the hoarse notes of command. And passing along, between the animated crowd of lookers-on, go grave men of politics, two by two, discussing the last telegrams from Constantinople and St. Peters-


burg; trim officers, looking just as if they had that moment been lifted out of bandboxes, and bewitching ladies, in rustling petticoats and trailing dresses, who cast coquettish glances at their admirers as they walk with their humble *suivantes* or their snowy-kerchiefed, linen-jacketed *bonnes*. But long before the dew begins to descend, every nook and corner of the garden is deserted, and Cismegiu is left to its lawful tenants, the crows, who come flying in by hundreds, flapping their black, ominous wings over house-top and steeple, to seek their nests among the most inaccessible branches. Prudence hurries the loiterers away from this low-lying and unhealthy region, for when night comes on, a white floating mist hovers above the weedy scum that decays on the surface of the artificial water, exhaling a poisonous miasma that has in it the germ of countless disorders.

The entrances to the grounds are perfect Beggars' Alleys, where the mendicants lie about on the stones in all the grotesque and repulsive shapes that human wretchedness can assume.

These narrow passages remind one of the Pool of Bethesda, or, the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. The Roumanian beggar is no vulgar cadger in a chronic state of famine, who tramps after you with a trumpery box of matches; or a sham seaman with wooden legs, who smears the pavement with mackerel and maritime views in chalk; but a true artist, a veritable Talma in tatters, who elevates his calling into a profession of which no gentleman out of elbows need be ashamed. He has none of the grave pathos of the Spanish *mendigo*, who is simply a decayed cavalier, imploring a favour of his richer neighbour, in the name of the Most Holy Virgin and all the saints, and who takes your polite refusal of "Excuse me, brother, for the love of God!" with a Grandisonian bow. This one is a blaring, blatant, loud-lunged impostor, who has dirt, and disease, and misery for a stock-in-trade, and who howls out his unsavoury wares to arrest the step of the passer-by. He gloats over the details of his malady in a shrill shrieking treble, and the more disgusting his deformity, and the more loathsome

his complaint, the louder and more voluble are his cries. He exhibits his ulcers, or the stumps of his amputated limbs, or the hideous excrescence on his neck, with a lively relish. He *kotows* with his naked forehead burrowing in the dust, and grovels wriggling on the ground in token of his abject submission. He thumps his chest, and crosses himself rapidly as he leers at you out of the corner of one villainous eye to see the effect of his performance. If through compassion for his rags and rottenness you bestow upon him a few stray coppers, he breaks into such fulsome adulation of your liberality, and flattering allusions to your progenitors, that you are glad to get out of his way, and the last specimen of his compliments that he shouts after you as you beat a hasty retreat, is that the prince is a thief and a black-guard as compared to your illustrious self!

We were once walking along the Boulevard, when a sturdy vagabond with the use of all his limbs, seeing that we were foreigners, and marking us out as an easy prey, came slouching behind us, whining out every conciliatory epithet



that a fertile imagination could suggest, and requesting us at the same time to replenish his pockets with a few "*ban*." The more he saw us deaf and blind and indifferent, the more he inflated his lungs and eulogised us in a continual *crescendo*. Now supplicating at the highest pitch of his voice, we allowed him to escort us for a considerable distance, answering neither yea nor nay. . At last one of us turned quietly round, and in excellent Roumanian, consigned the rogue and his bawling to the care of the Evil One, a verbal politeness which is as well understood here as in the purlieus of Whitechapel.

The effect of that simple locution was indescribable. The rascal stood stock-still a moment, utterly dumbfounded, staring at us with red wolfish eyes. Then he burst into such a torrent of unmentionable and foul abuse as would have rejoiced the shade of Captain Grose, bent on editing a classical dictionary of the native vulgar tongue. He went utterly beside himself with passion. He clutched at his mangy *caçiula* and threw it recklessly into the road. He tugged wildly at

his tangled mop of hair, and glared about him with impotent rage. Our calm had the same effect upon him as a red rag on a bull, and when we moved away, leaving him bellowing out his obscenities and expectorating freely upon the pavement in token of his unlimited contempt and derision for our persons, his maniacal howlings still reached us long after we had lost sight of him.

Each retired nook of the alley leading to Çismegiu has its own peculiar tenant, who arrogates to himself that especial spot by an indefinable right that all his fellow-beggars recognise, and never dream of disputing, just as the London crossing becomes in some degree the property of the sweeper, even in the eyes of the blue-coated myrmidons of the law. There is the blind girl with her sightless eye-balls turned to the sky and her hands crossed on her lap, who strikes up a church canticle in a piercing soprano whenever her quick ear catches the sound of an advancing footstep; and the shapeless bundle of frowsy odds-and-ends that represents a human

being of some sex or other, as one sees by the mutilated remains of a leg thrust forward in sickening bandages. There is the wintry crone with her withered face the colour of saffron, and her blear-eyes framed in red, claiming your pence in the name of every blessed saint in the calendar; and the garrulous old bare-headed mendicant who gabbles out prayers, entreaties, appeals to Heaven, and a description of his misfortunes in a shrill piping treble, to the obligato accompaniment of a copper halfpenny which he rattles unceasingly in an empty sardine-box.

*"Dimbovitza, apa dulce !
Çine bea, nu se mai duçe,"*

is the catchpenny couplet that hangs on everybody's lips. One hears it twenty times a day. The baby in swaddling-clothes can lisp it. The peasant mouths it over so many times that he no longer notices when he repeats it, any more than he notices the shower of utterly-untranslatable oaths that involuntarily escape him when his blind horse falls into a gaping rent in the roadway, or his over-laden ox slips down in the frozen lane, that

is as smooth and slippery as a skating-pond. Even the very dogs must be fain to attach some meaning in their own minds to this truly national saying :

“Dimbovitza, sweetest water !

Who drinks of thee, quits no more.”

What mirages do not these simple verses conjure up ! A limpid, swelling river, rolling its crystal tide between banks of verdure, scattering on its exulting way the precious drops that are the sources of all life—human, animal, and vegetable, while grateful voices are lifted up, as to the Nile in olden time, praising the river as the great Divine Principle. Blue as the Tajo, silvery as the Thames, rapid as the Tweed, with shores as green as those of the Garonne, one sees this life-giving stream that a whole people unites to glorify.

Ghostly and wan is the moonlight of fancy, as it pales before the broad daylight of fact. The Dimbovitza is a muddy, sluggish watercourse, that goes trickling through the town, impossible to be navigated, useless for agricultural purposes, horri-

ble to drink of. The thick yellow fluid has to be charged with alum and beaten with sticks, and left to settle in wooden butts before it is fit for even the commonest culinary purposes. Why on earth this wretched little driblet should be lauded in verse and praised in proverb is more than the foreigner of average intelligence can explain. Perhaps even the natives themselves could give no reason for it. It is a *cosa de España*—a thing that nobody understands.

When the trees are in leaf, Bucharest, in some places so ruinous and unsightly, takes a fresh and jaunty air of factitious youth, like an old body pranked out in juvenile fripperies. Broken palisades and crumbling masonry disappear under a mass of vivid green foliage. The villas, half Italian and half Moorish, no longer look down upon the stony wilderness of a bare courtyard, for flowers are springing up in the little enclosed patches of mould, the acacias are shaking their delicate leaves around the *kiosques*, and plants in wooden tubs are turning their newly-opened petals towards the sun, giving the whole place the look

of a Sevillian *patio* without the awning. Here and there ravages that are too extensive to admit of concealment, acquire a certain picturesqueness from the presence of all this shooting, clinging verdure.

If one should climb the hill of Filarète some summer evening, and turn to contemplate the "City of Pleasure" lying low in the valley behind him, he will hardly recognise the familiar spot that he so lately left. If the rain has fallen an hour or two since, and the brown old earth is perfuming all the air with her balmy incense; if the sunset-glories of the east are yet reigning in the sky, the pale violet merging into paler primrose, the sapphire flecked with bars of burning crimson, the pink flush that dies out into pearly-grey, the shadowy greens and browns, and purples that change into the nameless colours of the chrysoprase—Bucharest, with its white houses shining under that prismatic light, its flat roofs and rounded domes sheeted with metal, gleaming like actual palaces of silver, is a vision to go home and dream about. But let the enthusiastic tra-

veller beware how, dazzled by this ethereal prospect, he transfers its glowing details to the tablets of his memory, and, later on, gives to the world an imaginary picture. As well might he depict Arabia Petræa bubbling with the crystal fountains and waving with the palm-trees of the desert-mirage, as dull, work-a-day Bucharest seen in that fleeting sunset moment !

This city, as we said before, is one of intense contrasts. It is these singular antitheses that first strike the eye and remain longest upon the remembrance. Even the climate is no exception to the rule of contrarieties. There are but two seasons—summer from April to October, winter from November to March. The Danubian provinces are open on the side of Russia, and the glacial winds from the Caucasus and the Ural Mountains penetrate these unprotected regions, bringing with them a cold as intense as that of Moscow, while being contiguous to the Mediterranean by way of Bulgaria and Macedonia, the summers are the hot, arid, breezeless summers of Southern Italy—summer that changes into winter

as if by magic ; luxuriance that turns into barrenness ; splendour into desolation ; plenty into sterility. The leaves are swept away ; the blossoms are withered ; the clear sky grows opaque ; and white snow covers the green earth almost in the course of a single night. No tender spring-time filling the air with harmonious murmurings, and promises of a riper beauty yet to come ; no red and yellow autumn, with the sweet smell of its decaying leaves, and its memories, half-sad and wholly dear, that rise like ghosts about our pathway ; only the sultry heat of the meridian, and the freezing blasts of an Arctic land !

An ignorant superstitious clergy, without a shred of morality ; criminal intrigues without love ; divorces without restraint ; husbands without wives ; wives without husbands ; families divided and scattered, the sons with the mothers, the daughters with the fathers ; fortunes eaten up by loans ; estates burdened by mortgages ; rich men without a penny of cash ; long streets without houses ; splendid mansions and villainous hovels ; fine equipages and filthy gutters ; mag-

nificent dresses and scanty linen; Aubusson carpets and distempered walls; princely furniture and nothing in the larder; such is Bucharest!





A WINTER DRIVE ON THE
CHAUSSÉE.






A WINTER DRIVE ON THE CHAUSSÉE.

IT is winter in the city of Boyards. The snow has lain upon the ground a week or more, and the sledges have been out for the first time since many months. But one of those occasional welcome thaws, so common in the beginning of the cold season, has set in during the night, and the streets are now ankle-deep in slush and dirty, half-melted snow. The sky is clearer overhead, and the wind blows in warmer and more temperate gusts. It is as if Spring were about to revisit us when we least expected her.

We have been three days weather-bound in our hotel, and have long ago exhausted every

possible amusement that human weariness could suggest. We have cajoled the cook out of all his spare chestnuts, and have roasted them in the little ash-shovel, not bigger than a soup-ladle, among the beech-logs that crackled in the many-columned stove. We have drunk *rakiu* out of tiny glasses, and tried to persuade ourselves that it was better than brandy. We have sent our compliments to our neighbour the Vice-Consul, and have begged him to come in and take a hand at cards. We have mooned at the window for hours together, staring dismally at the ugly façade of the opera-house, and the frontal whereof no living man ever saw the like, and the snow that has been falling steadily, steadily, darkening all the air. Over and over again have we counted the few *birjars* that still kept to the carriage-stand, muffled over head and ears in scarlet-pointed hoods, and enveloped in cloaks of the same cheerful hue; and have taken a lively interest in the struggles of the vendor of cakes and coffee, who has thrice dug his stall out of the snow-drift that threatened to bury it.



But what a change a few hours has wrought in the appearance of the city ! Whole bands of scavengers are already busy clearing the foot-paths ; the street is running with water like an arm of the Dimbovitza, and every minute a tremendous, resonant thud is heard, as some heavy avalanche of snow slips down the sloping roof, and falls bodily upon the pavement beneath.

What screams of laughter mingle with the rattle of the carriage-wheels and the tintinnabulation of the sledge-bells as the unhappy pedestrians are knocked to right and left, and covered with snow from head to foot by the descent of one of these weighty masses !

Despite the difficulties and even the dangers of walking, the Strada Mogoşoi is swarming with people, and the road is lined with vehicles of every description, all flocking in the direction of the Chaussée.

With a sigh of unutterable thankfulness we leave the enervating atmosphere of our rooms, and go down in quest of a conveyance. The bare floor of the entrance-hall testifies to the great

powers of expectoration possessed by our native porter, who leaps up from the narrow wooden bench where he is reclining at full length, and lifts his conical black lamb's-wool cap as we approach.

He makes a sign in the direction of the carriage-stand, and a moment after a smart *birja*, lined with crimson velvet, with two really dashing greys and a Russian coachman in his comfortable national dress of dark-blue cloth and gay, many-coloured sash, draws deftly up at the door.

An independent fraternity are they, these Muscovite drivers, who scan a fare with an eye of criticism before they receive him upon their cushions, who reject everything that wears a uniform, and who can guess to a *ban* how much you are prepared to part with over and above the lawful hire! They belong, one and all, to a curious religious sect, which practises self-mutilation, eats no meat, and drinks no wine, and is not tolerated within the Tzar's dominions. They migrate hither and to Bucovina (where their bishop is) over the Transylvanian border, and

employ themselves exclusively as coachmen. Their little Victorias are the neatest, their horses the fastest and best-groomed, their dress the handsomest, and their skill in driving the most remarkable—putting the Hungarians and the Roumanians, in their *caçiulas* and dirty fur-lined *pelisses*, completely in the shade.

We, too, are bound for the Chaussée, *faute de mieux*. We know that we shall get stained by a cascade of melted snow from the passing wheels, that we shall be nearly jolted to death in the hard ice-ruts that have not yet yielded to the moist, clammy influence of the thaw—but what matters it? We know that the *allées* are swept clean, and though they may now be rapidly turning to a treacherous quicksand of soft mud, there is yet a little walking to be had.

How picturesque the street looks, as the wan sunlight falls over the irregular houses and lights up the vivid blues and greens of the *Mahalajoikas'* jackets and the bright shreds of colour in the winter *toilettes* of the ladies, whose carriages are taking the same road as ours! How brilliant

and alluring are the shop-fronts ! Here you see no product of native industry, except the long yellow rushlights that swing in the wind outside the chandlers' shutters farther down. Paris has contributed those dainty mob-caps and bewitching bonnets that cause the haughty patrician lady to turn her head, as she is borne quickly by in her barouche. Those satin couches and gilded looking-glasses are from Viennese *Fabriken*. Many of those glittering gold trinkets were fashioned in the *Vaterland*. Those workmanlike blades first saw the light in one of the grimy lanes of Sheffield.

We pass along the Podu Mogoşoi by the palace of Prince Carol, where the red, blue, and yellow flag flaunts from the roof, and the idle sentinels lean on their guns and watch the movement in the street. On we go in a straight undeviating line, past the long vista of modern gimcrack houses all stucco and plaster and fresh paint, with here and there a row of broken railings fencing-in some tumble-down mansion, where scraps of tarnished gilding still cling to the weatherbeaten front,

and the merry wind goes scrambling in and out through the dilapidated casements. That *Kirçma*, on the right, is the first halting-place of the peasants who come into the capital from the adjacent country villages. Here they stop the *carutza*, and get down and drink *rakiu* under the thatched eaves that, propped up by poles, run all in front of the house like a verandah; while their lean, half-starved brutes are regaled with a drink of water, and snatch a few sweet moments of repose, as they lie down in the soft, luxurious mud.

We have now left the city behind us. Ivan gathers up his reins, and the horses break into a more rapid trot; carriages and sledges are passing, and re-passing us at a furious pace. We are in the centre of the social life of Bucharest. It is the *Chaussée* that stretches itself out before us.

London has its Hyde Park; Paris its Bois de Boulogne; Berlin its Unter den Linden; Vienna its Prater; Bucharest its *Chaussée*.

A straight uninteresting road of a mile and a half, bordered by a formal double row of lindens;

dimly lighted at night by rare, primitive lamps, that burn with wick and oil ; enclosed either side by a dead-level plain that stretches as far as eye can see, its monotonous surface unbroken by a single hillock—a brown, arid, dusty desert in summer : a snowy steppe in winter.

Here and there, scattered along the route, are a few tawdry villas, habitable only in the mild season, with queer little gardens *à l'anglaise*, in which nothing seems to thrive, and which are decorated with trumpery images, and great round blue, and red, and silver globes, as big as footballs, stuck on long stakes, and planted in the *parterres*, in place of the flowers, that never seem to come up. Countless crowds of sable-coated crows swarm on the branches of the trees (the only trees that break the uniformity of the plain), and look down with solemn eyes upon the elegant equipages and the frivolous chattering throng. A fountain that never plays is in the middle of the road, a broad sheet of ice, or a stagnant weedy pool, according to the time of year, for like everything else in Bucharest, the Chaussée is incomplete.


Society knows but three places of *rendez-vous*, the *Salon*, the *Corso* and the Theatre. As nobody can walk here from the town, so execrable is the roadway, the people one meets are mostly of the better classes, and know each other, and are continually bowing and exchanging compliments, and waving their hands in graceful salutation, so that the drive resembles a vast drawing-room.

What an indolent, unenergetic race is this Roumanian *jeunesse dorée* that has grafted its flimsy French immorality upon the sloth of the Orient !

From modern Babylon, on the banks of the Seine, they have imported all the old attractive vices ; the levity, the reckless extravagance, the wicked witty sayings, the well-bred atheism, the comedy of adultery. Paris has tainted this growing city with the breath of her corruption. You can trace her influence through all and over all. She has transmitted to Young Roumania her lively manners and her easy morals ; but the liveliness of the one and the ease of the other have developed in their progress Eastward.

The peasant still groans and sweats under the

curse of Adam. He works hard, and lives hard, and goes through his uneventful, laborious life, unvisited even by one of those elevating influences that in more civilised countries come occasionally like heaven-descended rays to cheer the darkness of those who toil in order that they may not starve. Scarce the equal of the patient ox that he prods with his cruel goad as it treads beside him in the furrows, the Roumanian peasant has not yet emerged from the night of ignorance and slavery into the daylight of knowledge and freedom. Centuries of oppression on the one side and of abject submission on the other, have dulled his intellect and broken his spirit, and given him the servile, deprecating air that is never seen on the faces of free men. What a world of difference between these two types of society—the pampered sybarite of the city, and the tattered inhabitant of the mud-hovel! Is there any other affinity between them than their common claim upon the Mother Earth? What points of resemblance are there between that well-dressed cynical offshoot of a hot-bed



civilisation, the fit of whose gloves is of more moment to him than the rise and fall of empires, who reclines back in his elegant carriage that is paid for (if it be paid for at all) by the tithes wrung from the toil of his wretched brother, and who, gay and smiling, and *débonnaire*, flings to right and left of him his compliments, his courtesies, his delicate artful flatteries—and that degraded son of the soil who pashes doggedly along in the mire with soddened rags bound round his feet and legs by thongs, a foul sheepskin dangling from his shoulders, his brown bosom bare to the winter's blast, his long matted hair falling over his face and eyes?

And these Boyards, and sons of Boyards, who are rolling by us on the drive, how suave they are, these dark-visaged, dulcet-tongued people! Life seems to have no serious side for them. They are ready to laugh with everybody, and to weep with no one. What eyes, that at one moment sparkle with arch vivacity, and the next melt in the most languishing tenderness! How musical is their soft corrupted Latin, in which every word

seems like a caress! What attractive polished manners, what sweet seductive glances!

But woe to the single-hearted foreigner who takes the voluble protestations of these amiable idlers for any other than mere airy breath, who pins his faith on the ephemeral friendship of one of these bright, brilliant human butterflies! Their mendacity is simply incredible to a sober-minded Briton, even though he make every allowance for Oriental hyperbole—and there is as much dependence to be placed upon them as on the wind that shifts to all four points of the compass in the course of a single hour. One might as well believe in a Greek of the Levant, a Chinese merchant bent on making a bargain, or a Portuguese Jew! They are the spoilt children of Caprice and Idleness, and if one be wise in his generation, he will don the cap and bells of Folly, and laugh and caper with the best of them, for it is impossible to take this people *au sérieux*.


We go on to the *rond point*, and turn again. How marked here are the two most prominent

characteristics of the Roumanians—love of finery, and hatred of exertion! Observe that broad-chested young carpet-warrior, whose fierce moustaches seem to indicate the most martial, blood-thirsty disposition; how he lolls back in his *birja* like a sick girl, while the horses draw up by the railings, and he languidly inhales the air, and contemplates his faultless fawn-coloured gloves, his long boots shiny as mirrors, and his thin gleaming spurs! See how half of these effeminate men shrink before the least breath of wind, and raise the huge fur collars of their coats about their ears, as though there were death in the faintest blast that sweeps over the fields of snow! Look at the showy liveries and the audacious *toilettes*. What are all the glories of the Lord Mayor's chariot compared to that grand vehicle, with those gorgeous lackeys in sky-blue suits and capes of richly-striped, dark-brown sable, and a real *Jäger* on the box beside the coachman, dressed in bran-new green hunting-clothes, with a knife in his belt, and a cocked-hat like a field-marshal's?

We are half-way down the drive, and touch Ivan lightly on the right arm, and then in the middle of the back. He pulls up, for he knows that he has had the signal to stop. Here there is a decent path enough, kept smooth and clean for pedestrians (one of the very few places in or out of Bucharest where one can walk), yet it is scarcely ever used.

The carriages at a standstill line the road, and people sit shivering in their furs to take the air, and never dream of getting out and circulating their blood by a little brisk exercise. But we, who are not to the "manner born," look forward to a little trot under the bare lindens as worth a thousand *courses* in a *birja*, and at the risk of appearing eccentric we jump down, and set off for a constitutional.

The Allée is nearly deserted. An English governess passes us, gravely conversing with her dark-eyed charges in the dear familiar accents of home. Far down the path two merry young subs, who are not as yet inoculated with the national indolence, are pelted each other with snowballs,



which they roll up in their gloved hands, and the ring of their fresh boyish laughter is a pleasant sound to hear.


But now a neat Victoria glides along, and in it there is a corpulent old man in gaudy uniform, with decorations in lines three-deep upon his breast. The game and the laughter cease as if by magic, and there are no two graver, and more dignified *sous-lieutenants* in all his Serene Highness's service, than these who are standing stiffly up to salute their general.

A barouche, drawn by two splendid glossy brown horses, stops at a little distance beyond us. It is a turn-out that would attract attention in any capital, so perfectly is it within the limits of good taste. The lining is of claret-coloured satin, and the servants' liveries are of the same dark shade, with narrow variegated bands upon the sleeves, and cockades to match. A beautiful woman with proud languid eyes is the sole occupant of the carriage. She gets out, leaning upon the footman's arm, who leads her across the icy

insecure path to where the walk is free from snow. With many caressing words and gestures, she takes a tiny, impudent, white Maltese terrier out of her muff, who jumps and frisks about his mistress, and elevates his small black nose in the air, and gives a succession of shrill indignant barks, as a ragged peasant shuffles by, and dares to cast a profane eye on his sacred person.

Madame hates the Chaussée, the dull dreary level plain, the stunted leafless trees, the long string of the same carriages bearing the same people whom she has seen well-nigh every day in the same place for years. She would rather be at home in her boudoir, with doors and double-windows hermetically closed, and the stove piled high with wood, until the temperature of the room resembles that of a hot-house, and eat little sweet slabs of fruit-preserve, and drink deep draughts of cold iced-water, while she lazily cuts the pages of the last new French novel.

But, *que voulez-vous?* Bijou's health demands that he should walk at least once a day in the open air; so madame has stifled the little ghost



of a weary yawn, and has clapped her hands thrice for Maritza, and suffered herself to be attired, while Dimitri, the clean-shaven, has harnessed the chestnut horses, swearing appallingly all the time in his native Russ.

And now, faintly sighing, madame draws close about her a long cloak lined with costly fur, that reaches almost to the ground, and lounges down the pathway with listless grace, sweeping the Allée as she goes with the folds of her rich black velvet train.

Bijou trots along beside her, like a sensible dog not too proud to be happy. He is thoroughly enjoying his promenade, although the wind, that respects nobody's dignity, blows his flossy hair all the wrong way, takes unheard-of liberties with his feathery tail, and lifts his long pendent silky ears, until one sees their soft roseate lining just like the colour of a pink seashell.

The crowd of carriages is greater than ever, and is constantly being augmented by fresh arrivals. Numerous sledges are dashing to and

fro, and the tinkling music of their bells is replete with charm. How the whole scene is glowing with life and animation ! This vivid picture, set in a frame of snow, is like nothing else in Europe. The brilliant uniforms of the officers ; the splendid furs, spoils of every northern clime ; the rainbow dresses of the women ; and the fanciful decorations of the sledges, on which everybody seems to exhaust his taste ; all the glittering, moving mass continually changing places like the figures in a kaleidoscope, while the white untrodden snow recedes either side towards the level line of the horizon !


A *coupé* rolls by, affording us a glimpse of a dazzling object perched upon the box seat. A fair face looks through the closed window, and a little hand passes a laced *mouchoir* over the misty panes, but it does not arrest our eyes, already attracted by a more uncommon sight. It is that Albanian, clothed in brightest scarlet, and scintillating all over with gold from head to foot ; with tight red leggings, stiff with the same

costly needlework, coming out from under a short kilted petticoat of snowy linen—an Albanian, who is among the *valetaille* just what a peacock is among the barn-door fowl. Mark this piratical-looking Greek, as he passes with folded arms and lowering brow, and spiked moustaches that would make a General of Division mad with envy; look at his vermilion cap, with its long blue hanging tassel, jauntily placed aslant on his raven locks; the silver purse and chain that dangle at his side; the sash bound round his waist, wherein there lies *perdu* a whole arsenal of knives, and pistols, and murderous yataghans! What a gorgeous, ferocious, expensive, useless wretch it is! Those two hundred pounds' worth of finery he has upon his back would give food for a week to all the families of hungry pariahs who herd together among the rubbish and ruins and deserted places of this half-barbaric city. How the tailor's fingers must have ached with sewing patterns in gold thread on that swaggering rascal's scarlet jacket! How tired the poor *spalatorassa* must have become

as she plaited up those yards and yards of stiff white linen skirts, that stick out from his hips like a ballet-dancer's clouds of tarlatan !

Hark ! what a silvery jingling of sledge-bells ! How all the air grows musical as the sharp trot of the horses sets them running in a rapid rhyme ! Here comes one of the greatest dandies in Bucharest—a scion of a princely house. His equipages are something marvellous, and their eccentricity is only equalled by their artistic taste. Apparently the most capricious mortal breathing, we saw him one day in a plain dark brougham, without monogram or coronet, with a couple of bay horses in leather harness, and a coachman in sombre livery ; and the next, in a sledge all gold and bright blue velvet, with a driver in a Polish dress of bright blue velvet too, trimmed all over with pale grey Astracan. We draw nearer the rails as he approaches. We are curious to know in what new vehicle this man of many minds will appear to-day.

A pair of snow-white horses are coming to-



wards us at a rapid pace—arching their delicate fore-legs that hardly seem to touch the ground. White fox-tails dangle from their pointed ears, and over their backs is spread a white silk net, all sprinkled with black tufty tassels, that floats out wide on either side in the quick passage through the air. The beautiful cream-coloured sledge is picked out with gold and black lines, and is padded with sable velvet. The pretty Muscovite boy-driver, with his intelligent blue eyes, his peachy cheeks, and curling auburn hair, looks superb in his long black velvet Russian coat, tied at the waist by a silken sash of bright rose-red (the one touch of colour lighting up all the black and white), as he stands like a Roman charioteer, holding the reins with a steady, practised hand.

What a dainty, darling little turn-out it is! Just such an one as the Fairy Godmother might have sent to Cinderella when she put on her famous slippers and hurried away to the ball. The fortunate being who possesses all this luxury is a slight elegant young man, faultlessly dressed

in the last fashion, his knees covered by a bear-skin wrapper. He has a dark unpleasant saturnine face, and looks thoroughly discontented and miserable, as he sits in an uncomfortable attitude, holding a tortoise-shell cane between his small grey-gloved hands. One cannot help wondering why on earth he should make so much fuss about his appearance, when it seems to afford him personally so little satisfaction.

Here comes a quiet dark-looking sledge, the gloomy taste evinced by its owner being in direct contrast to the fantastic, feminine vagaries of our Prince Charming. Excepting the vivid scarlet lining of the rug, everything here is black. Even the tawny Boyard's *pelisse* is of sable skins. The tall Hungarian driver, with his furry cap, immense bear-cuffs and collar, his wild hair, black flashing eyes, enormous moustaches, and swarthy skin, looks like a certain person whom it is not polite to name.

We sit down on a bench in front of the empty *café* and its gingerbread floral arches, that remind

one of a village scene behind the foot-lights. Here the hot dusty crowd alights in summer, to take a glass of sherbet or a *dulçeaza*, but at this season it is shut up.

We are still watching the carriages, whose number is diminishing. We linger on under the black branches of the lindens, talking in subdued voices of far-off home; of the glades yet grassy and green, that the winds have strewn with a gold and russet and blood-red carpet of rotting leaves; of the rustic hamlet nestling against the hill-side within sound of the solemn chanting of the sea; of the dear familiar faces that seem still present with us here on the threshold of the Morning Land!

Two wild dogs are quarrelling over the carcass of a raven that lies with its sooty wings outstretched, stiff and stark, on the hard snow. The governess and her pupils vanish into a great family coach, and Bijou and his mistress have long ago departed. The crowd of carriages has dwindled down to a very few, all of which are taking the direction of the city.

There goes the man, with his escort of two savage mastiffs, to light up the oil-lamps. Two mastiffs, a necessary protection, for there are many queer characters along the dark Baniassa road, and sometimes in the depths of winter a stray wolf, made bold by famine, comes prowling in search of food even as near the town as this is.

Somebody says in a plaintive voice that he is "very hungry." The effect upon us is electric. We look at one another and start to our feet. It is true, we had forgotten it; the dinner-hour must be very near, and we have all got the appetites of hunters!

Ivan is looking at us anxiously. He, too, evidently considers that it is time for us to be off. We are of thy mind, O *Frate!* who art also hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt—thy little *corricu* from the itinerant vendor's stick, and thy glass of steaming *tchai!*

We climb into the carriage and tuck the rug comfortably around us. "*Haide birjar,*" says our spokesman, who is insufferably proud of his

Roumanian. Russian Ivan needs no second bidding. Lightly touching his mud-stained greys, we dash along the dim deserted *Chaussée* towards the twinkling lights of the town.

We are all silent. For are we not all thinking of the royal sturgeon, fresh from the waters of the Black Sea, that is awaiting us in the custody of the *chef*—of the toothsome bustard, stuffed with chestnuts, that Jack shot in the marshes yesterday—and of a certain little white wine of the country, with its *bouquet* recalling the sunny slopes of the Rhine?





THE TZIGANS AT HOME.







THE TZIGANS AT HOME.

*"Sorciers, Bateleurs et Filous,
Reste immonde
D'un ancien monde,
Sorciers, Bateleurs et Filous,
Gais Bohémiens, d'où venez-vous ?"*


BÉRANGER.

"**W**ELL, Nitzoï," we say one morning to our washerman, a native gipsy who has abandoned his life of vagabondage, and has become a dweller in houses, and a decent member of the working community; "Well, Nitzoï, and what is your opinion of Roumania?"

Nitzoï puts his bundle of linen down again. There is nothing he loves so dearly as a little gossip (a relic of the old Adam), and though we

have already chattered with him all the time we have been eating our modest lunch of charcoal-cooked *carnatz* and green gherkins pickled in salt water, he is yet quite willing to tarry a few moments longer. He says that he kisses our hands as he takes the cigarette we offer him. He squats beside the stove, and proceeds to light it leisurely by a red, burning ember, which he selects after great deliberation, and grasps between the tongs. He puffs away for some minutes before he replies, still squatting on the ground in his frog-like attitude, and staring at the bright, leaping flame with the stolidity of a Red Indian.

A queer study for the philosopher is this brown pariah, who is now claimed by society, as the firelight flickers across his thoughtful face. How unmistakably those dusky cheeks, tanned by the sun of summer and roughened by the wind of winter, and those dark, melancholy eyes, betray his origin! So does his shiny, raven hair, now cropped short in accordance with the stern dictates of fashion, and twisted above the ear



into what are facetiously known as "Newgate Knockers." But that scarlet and white striped cravat, that purple lounging-coat faced with well-worn velvet (the gift of some generous patron), and the not too spotless shirt-front of civilisation, mark how wide is now the gulf between him and his tattered, shoeless brethren.

Nitzoï turns his mild lustrous eyes full upon us, and makes answer with all the dignity of a disgusted citizen and one who has a *locus standi*:

"*Coconash*', it is a land of *Tzigans*!"

A land of *Tzigans*! We sit thinking over it long after Nitzoï has made his salaam and departed. A land of *Tzigans*! Ay! so it is, good friend, and in a most literal sense! A land of gipsies and of wanderers. A land of outcasts and of aliens. A resting-place for a branch of that vast family over whose birth there brood the dense shadows of an antiquity too remote for the keenest eye to penetrate, the country of whose inheritance must for ever remain mythical and unknown.

We have oftentimes been moved to pity by the condition of the Roumanian peasant, that being with the intelligent eyes and the grand classic profile, and the soul that is as dark as night. (By the way, how clearly one can trace the hereditary type that still reproduces itself among these descendants of the ancient Dacians! There are many faces that are, line for line, the same as those still extant upon the coins of pagan Rome, struck hundreds of ages back.) But in the lowest depths there is a lower deep. Beyond the ignorant, brutalised, apathetic son of the soil (only released from actual serfdom during the reign of Alexandre Couza, the last Prince of Moldo-Wallachia), who slouches by in his foul, untanned sheepskin mantle, with filthy rags for shoes and gaiters, which he never removes until they rot and fall away, there is a being yet lower in the scale of creation who walks erect upon two feet, and whom naturalists do not class among the brutes—it is the *Tzigan*.

Nothing can exceed the hatred and contempt in which these poor harmless creatures are held

by the mixed races bordering the Danube, who, in spite of all their wretchedness and penury, can still lay claim to a country and to a descent. They are cuffed and spat upon, insulted and reviled. For is not the *Tzigan* Nature's mountebank, of no good in the world, unless it is to make sport for honest Christian folk? But it is not only at the hands of the lower classes that these unfortunate people meet with every indignity and persecution. The rich and educated bear with the presence of these born outcasts, just as they tolerate the wild-dogs or any other nuisance. Indeed, of the two, the four-footed pariah would be the most likely to win kind words from a Boyard.

We remember being in Belgrade some four years ago. It was in the public-room of the "*Hôtel de la Couronne Serbe*," and we were taking our after-dinner coffee. There came in a certain Slav Colonel of our acquaintance, who had acquired a little superficial polish in Paris, that glossed over the native raw material, and made one take him, at the first blush, for a very

pleasant, gentlemanly fellow. . He joined our group, and we welcomed him with cordiality. By-and-by, a few notes from some shrill instrument broke in upon our idle *bavardage* and the click of the billiard-balls. It was a band of *Laoutari*, those ambulant *artistes* who possess, one and all, the soul of the born musician. They struck up their wild barbaric music, standing around the door. Our Colonel motioned to the waiter to make them enter. They crowded in, a picturesque group of gipsies, with ragged garments and long unkempt hair, and the softest, darkest eyes imaginable, full of the most intense expression of melancholy, as befits a shunned and down-trodden people.

They ranged themselves in a semicircle, and again began their weird, monotonous symphonies, with which they blended the mournful cadence of their voices. Fascinated by a strange feeling of delight, we listened to this savage music, that now rose like the piercing scream of the wind reverberating through the northern forest, and then fell into some low, wailing, sobbing cry, as if of a lost

spirit wandering in outer darkness. But the Colonel was not satisfied. "Down on your knees, dogs!" he shouted in a voice of thunder to the poor performers, who were not worthy to play in our presence standing upright.

The coarse German *Kellner* gesticulated ecstatically, with one very dirty forefinger ornamented by a huge brass ring, and burst into brutal laughter (in which he was heartily joined by the officer) as one after another the inoffensive wretches dropped down obediently upon their knees, and continued their plaintive strains, full of an irresistible sadness, supplementing them with glances of the utmost humility, to deprecate our lordly anger. But we did not hear the end of the concert, for we got up and went away, after giving all our little spare silver pieces to the *Laoutari*, and when we met that Colonel again we cut him dead.

Whence come they, these nomad wanderers, who have arrogated to themselves, since time immemorial, the power of reading men's destinies in the stars—this strange people, with separate

laws and a universal language, in which they can interchange ideas whether they meet in Moscow or in Madrid, in the streets of London or in the lanes of Stamboul ?


Historians are not wanting to denote the exact region of their nativity. Singara in Mesopotamia, Cilicia in Assyria, the biblical province of Sinhar, are successively enumerated as the cradle of this mysterious race. Some portray them as descending from the coast of Zanzibar by way of Egypt; others as immigrating into Spain, from Tangi-Tan, a mountainous district of Africa; others again affirm that they come from the Caucasus, or out of the Palus Meotis. They are the remnants of the Avatars; the degraded Helots of Sparta; the Bacchantes of Thrace; the Siguni of Herodotus; Egyptians, Nubians, Ethiopians, Armorites, even descendants of the ancient Usbecs of Persia. Every writer has his own theory concerning this erratic people, upon whom seems laid the finger of an irate God, who appear to be followed by an invisible and abiding curse—the curse of wandering and of alienation—

the curse of labour and of poverty—the curse of shame and of despisedness.

The Israelites are the tribes that most resemble the gipsies, in their identity that remains eternally unchanged, and the fact of their roving about the wide world, a people without a country. If the Children of Judah really are, as they are imagined to be, the chosen servants of the Almighty, may we not be pardoned for supposing that these lawless, diabolic imps of witchcraft, with their mischievous eyes, their itching fingers, and their godless superstitions, are the *protégés* of some darker and more mysterious Power? Gitanos in Spain; Zingari in Italy; Rhagarin in Egypt; Tschinganilh in Turkey; Bohémiens in France; Pharóé Nemzetséq in Hungary; Heydens (or heathens) in Holland; Zigeuner in Germany; Tartares in Denmark; Charami (or brigands) in Arabia—under fifty different appellations, in fifty different lands, these singular nomads still preserve unimpaired their striking attributes and peculiar physiognomy. In the Occident or in the Orient, whether braving

the bitter blast of the rude Norwegian winter, or basking in the enervating sun of an Italian noon-tide, they speak a common language; resort to the same petty industries to obtain their daily food; lead the same wild free lives in the open air; and are all alike distinguished for the same predatory, pilfering habits, that make their vicinity to be everywhere regarded with mis-giving and distrust by the farmer and the housewife. And though long centuries have elapsed since the representatives of the race of Roma first drifted asunder into the uttermost parts of the earth; though pathless oceans have rolled between them; though vast mountain-chains have divided the countries of their sojourn; though forest, and river, and prairie have kept them distinct and apart, they are still one family, united by an indissoluble bond, and a similarity of feature, speech, and habits.

Here in Wallachia the gipsies have a traditional claim upon the soil. It was by the sister province of Moldavia that a horde three thousand strong first entered the gates of Europe from the




East. Chroniclers assert that this exodus occurred in the year 1417, when Alexandre, *Voïvode* of Moldavia, gave them permission to settle in the neighbourhood of Suceava. Thence they migrated hither and to the adjacent countries, and their numbers have increased so greatly since then, that *Dnu. Cogalniceano*, in his "*Essai sur les Cigains de la Moldo-Valachie*," published some forty years ago, estimated that there were no less than 200,000 of these houseless vagrants scattered throughout the Principality—a figure that must be largely exceeded by this time.

The gipsies in Roumania are divided into three classes. The *Laïesi*, who follow various occupations and subsist in some measure by labour. They are masons, blacksmiths, bricklayers, tinkers, or lead tame bears about the streets to dance, carve out wooden spoons for the kitchen, burn charcoal, or play upon their rude primitive instruments. The *Vatrari*, those who are hired to assist in domestic duties. And the *Netotsi*, the Tzigan proper, who sleeps on the bare ground, shelters himself in deserted ruins, and lives

upon whatever scanty fare he can beg or steal.

The physiognomies of these forlorn creatures, forgotten of civilisation, are expressive and mobile. Their colour is anything from the pale brown of the creole to the sooty blackness of the negro. Upon their foreheads, overshadowed by dusky, shining hair, one can read the traces of a profound habitual depression; their jetty eyes burn with a smothered, sombre light between long obscuring lashes; it is plain to perceive that the wretchedness of their lot is not ignored by the Tzigans.

Outcasts from the altar as from the hearth, they do not believe in any religion. They profess a sort of feticism, worshipping whatever is of use to them, and can ameliorate the hardships of their daily life and soften the rigour of the pitiless elements. Thus the tent that protects them against the storm, the violin that procures them a few halfpence by the melody of its strings, and the rough forge upon which they fashion their horseshoes, are all objects of veneration. But



outwardly the gipsy, wherever he may be, conforms to the creed of his adopted country. In Christian lands he feigns belief in Jesus of Nazareth and the mystery of the Trinity; in Turkey he calls Allah to witness, and prays at sunset like a true servant of the Prophet; and if a kingdom of Judah still survived, he would munch the cake of the Passover as one who had Abraham to father.

They have no marriage rites. When a young man sees a *Romni* who pleases him, he makes her an offer to set up housekeeping in the nearest hole or corner that promises a shelter from the wind and rain, and if the lady does not frown upon his advances, the union is concluded without any more fuss or bother.

Here in Roumania they permit their children to be baptised into the Greek Church, not on the ground of any delicate scruples of conscience, but for the more solid consideration of Don Basilio, the love of filthy lucre—the presents of money from the people better off than themselves whom

they may induce to stand as sponsors to their brown babies.


The *Tárdna* is their national dance—their *Fandango*, their *Romaika*, their Highland fling—in which they throw off with their heels the heaviness lying upon their hearts, or the pangs of hunger gnawing at their vitals. The majority of the Roumanian gipsies, like the great brotherhood in all countries, prefer to beg, or to filch, or to roam about as wandering minstrels, conjuring coppers out of obdurate pockets; yet, as we said before, a certain class of them work very hard in the capital as masons and bricklayers, just as the Irish “navvies” are employed in London. Others, as in Hungary, are itinerant menders of pots and kettles and shoers of horses, and thread the crooked, roughly-paved streets with the appliances of their trade slung at their backs, their bronzed, brawny chests naked to the wind, their black elfin locks falling round their faces, scarred and marred by perpetual exposure to the rapid alternations of arctic cold and tropic heat.

No Lares and Penates guard the sacred shelter of their hearth. No cunning casements shut out the winter blast and the summer glare. They suffer uncomplainingly the caprices of the seasons. Their existence is spent between the cold earth and the naked sky. They hide like foxes in holes in the ground. They crouch like wild-dogs (their invariable companions in misfortune) on any deserted rubbish heap that promises a shelter, however meagre.

Their beautiful, dusky children are born among the dilapidated ruins that encumber the byways of this half-finished city, in which there is always a palace falling to decay, or a mansion in course of completion that is abandoned for want of funds. If by moving rhetoric, or by the chanting of their weird melodies, or rarer still by honest industry, they can buy the daily meal of "*mamaliga*," and perchance an onion or shred of garlic to flavour it withal, these children of Night and Nature are as happy as kings. Wood to boil the caldron is always to be had for the stealing, and mirth and good-fellowship make the poor

meal of corn a banquet for the Gods. And when they die they trouble neither priest nor *popa*, and the place of their burial, if in consecrated ground at all, is unmarked by any of those outward emblems of faith and hope that invest even the humblest graves with a touching poetry. So that the contempt which follows the *Tzigan* through life, in death is changed into a merciful oblivion.

How often, in our rambles through the town, have we not stopped before some new building in course of erection, to watch the swarthy workmen at their labour, reminding one irresistibly of the sunburnt Israelites, as they toiled centuries ago, in Rameses of the Pharaohs. Here, as they are seen at work, it is quite a family gathering. The young men and the maidens have come to assist their fathers; the elders smoke their pipes in dignified silence, and watch their sons and grandsons carrying on the rude tasks, from which their own stiffened joints now incapacitate them; the little children and babies tumble about in the sand and pummel each other with their small brown fists,



in happy unconsciousness of the infamy that is their portion. Bare-legged and bare-headed are these little rascals, and often bare-bodied too. Sometimes they can boast a dirty-white, scarecrow garment open at the breast, honeycombed all over with holes, and just barely kept in a piece by a few shreds of the original fabric; but these are the offspring of wealthy or over-fastidious mothers—the generality have no other adornment than the dark, glossy skin in which they were born. The men wear loose, baggy pantaloons, and the national *caçiula* of lamb's-wool, if they are rich enough to possess one; the women, any old rags that can be made to represent female attire.

The gipsies are the pet children of Nature. Their beauty is sometimes startling. Their eyes are the most expressive things in creation. In those dark, glittering orbs one reads a host of contradictory emotions—savage modesty and naïve sensuousness, arch derision and dreamy languor. Their limbs are long, and supple, and slender. Their hair is curling, and black as ebony; their teeth are white, and their lips are red as

the deep-sea coral. Perhaps the most attractive thing about them is the wild untutored elegance of their every movement—their all-pervading charm.

Beside the undulating graces of one of these ruddy nut-brown nymphs, an Andalusian Doña would move like a marionette. Everything in them is music and poetry—the music of melancholy, and the poetry of passion. Their lithe, swinging steps seem ever keeping in time to some mute rhythmical measure. Their wild bursts of song are like the untrammelled utterances of a free bird on the wing.

But the freshness of all this sunny morning of youth lasts only a little while. The *beauté du diable* of a gipsy girl passes as rapidly as a cloud. They are never beautiful but while they are young; scarcely do they reach womanhood before their exuberant charms begin to fade. It is the old story of the bud that breaks into a blossom and falls away in a shower of ruined leaves. It is scarcely credible that the work of a few years can change the blooming child-woman, who cap-

tivates us by her vivacity, her sly coquetry, and her ardent glances, into the wrinkled, hideous crone, with her yellow skin puckered up into a thousand creases, her flabby figure, her broad naked feet, her knotted, crooked fingers !

It is a remarkable circumstance that in Bucharest, the City of Cities *par excellence*, where no feminine beauty can take its walks abroad without being molested, the most exquisite of these *Tzigan* sylphides pass through the streets without attracting so much as a careless glance of admiration.

Boyards in fur pelisses, officers in showy uniforms, civilians in motley mufti, jostle each other on the pavement, and eagerly peer into the passing *coupés*, where the listless Roumanian ladies, as fine as powder and paint can make them, lean back in studied attitudes, and play off their stale little artificial airs, and rehearse the old wearisome comedy with the last new lover of yesterday. But these worshippers at the shrine of Beauty never dream of dropping their eyes to the level of the roadway, where, splashing by choice through the dirty running water of the

gutter, there goes leaping and singing a girl with a step as light as a mountain fawn's and an eye as dark and eloquent as that of a gazelle, whose rich, rippled, uncombed tresses are floating loosely over her shoulders, and whose dewy pouting lip is like a cherry that the sun has kissed blood-red.

How deep-rooted must be the prejudice existing against this unfortunate caste, when here, among the most impressionable people of the universe, beauty is no longer beauty and youth is no longer youth! Even our Hungarian *rendaş*, who chops the wood and draws the water, and has not a second pair of boots to his feet, considers himself as a being of another sphere from these bright brilliant, despised creatures. His cheek would be suffused by a blush of indignant shame if he imagined for a moment that we could think him capable of looking on any of these young gipsy girls, who come from time to time into our courtyard, begging for alms, with any other than an eye of disdain.

He does not see, as we do, how exquisite are these statues of Venus in bronze. He has no

senses for the rounded limbs that shine through the torn, tawdry rags. The glitter of those animated eyes sparkling with eager hope and expectancy fail to move him. The slender dusky hands, outstretched for charity, are only the itching palms of a dirty vagrant.

He looks upon these beautiful ideal figures bespattered with the mud and filth of the streets, and does not seem to know that they are women. And so it is with the native of whatever degree.

Despised by the people among whom he dwells, the Gipsy retaliates by despising them in his turn. All other races are *Gadschi*, or *Giaours*; he only is *Romnitschel*, the son of the woman. “*Han du me Romnitschel?*” (Art thou the son of a woman?) are the masonic words addressed by one Tzigan to another whom he meets for the first time, and which will be immediately understood, though the stranger be from the Antipodes.

He guards the secret of his language with jealous care—for this alone has enabled him to defy the assaults of Time and Change.

The Roumanians, though they accord these

harmless parasites a contempt beyond that with which they treat the ragged-coated, slit-eared, bare-ribbed mongrels of the gutter and the refuse-heap, hold them in a secret, superstitious fear, on account of their dabbling in the Black Art, their reputed commerce with their father the devil, and their possession of the *jettatura*, the evil eye. It is believed that these dark, restless shapes will return with the Antichrist at the Day of Judgment, to torment Christian people and eat up their children alive.

“The Gipsy,” says Malte-Brun, “is independent and happy.—A dunghill serves him for a throne, and an old oak tree for a daïs.”

And this is the terse summary of the life and character of the son of Roma.





A GIPSY CAMP.







A GIPSY CAMP.


TO-NIGHT we are bent on following the example of that wisest of all Mussulmen, the Calif Haroun Al Raschid (of blessed memory !), when he tumbled out of bed at a ghostly hour, and went patrolling the town of Bagdad in quest of adventure, accompanied by Mesrour the black slave, and the sleepy, yawning, shuffling old Grand Vizier, who must have wished his whimsical master in the 'Paradise of the Prophet before any such notion had crept into his royal head.

It is growing late. Windows have been lighted up a long while ago, and courtyard gates are being closed, as we sally out into the streets in search of the house where Balem the blacksmith

is drinking and making merry over his solitary jar of wine.

We stroll away down the Podu Mogosoi as far as the Strada Carol I., and enter the Calea Craiovei, where, passing the Tribunal de Commerce, we wend our way through the Jewish quarter, into the most ancient and primitive part of Bucharest, the district of the Metropolie, with the Church standing on the brow of the hill. Even here we mark how the refinements of Western civilisation have already toned down the ruder imagination of the East.

Rambling barracks that were once considered the *acmé* of architectural beauty, are now contemptuously abandoned for some pert villa or stuccoed mansion that rears its head beside their crumbling ruins. The dilapidated churches surrounded by broken gravestones, with loopholes and formidable walls like fortresses, have existed long enough to see their worshippers forsake them for more modern edifices with stately spires and glowing frescoes. Edifices whose specious



attractiveness is only a momentary charm, for the flimsy brickwork that is daubed over with all these yellows, and greens, and crimsons, soon yields to the hand of Time, and what is so new, and vivid, and solid-looking a structure to-day, will become a broken-down, blurred, and disfigured ruin in less than a decade hence.

There are no stone-quarries, or, more correctly speaking, none that have ever been worked, in Roumania. The very cubes and flags with which the principal streets of Bucharest have lately been paved, have been imported from Scotland and Southern Italy at an enormous cost. From the same countries the stones came with which two or three of the newest public buildings have been erected, and the massiveness and imposing aspect of these may well be a source of pride to the Roumanians, when they contrast them with others, built only a few years ago, and which are already assuming the appearances of age. Every habitation has hitherto been raised by means of bricks made upon the spot, of the most ordinary and unenduring kind. Hence all this

recurrence of desolation and premature decay that arrests the wandering eye of the stranger as he perambulates the streets of the city.

But to come back to our night excursion through the deserted lanes of suburban Bucharest. We have strayed into a dreary neighbourhood, where the planks, and mortar, and sand of half-finished houses strew the narrow roadway, and the clamorous yelping of vagrant dogs is the unmelodious music that salutes the ear. We go on for a few steps farther, until we arrive at a wild desert place, piled high all over with loose heaps of fragmentary rubbish, and having a tumble-down Greek church in its centre, that stands out black and gloomy against the starless sky. All is in darkness, save where, dotting the barren waste here and there with lurid patches of brightness, there leap up red blazing tongues of flame from the low camp-fires.

Who crouch about these burning logs? For what class of human beings does this dismal space of neglected ground represent the comfort and security of hearth and home?

Let us draw nearer to these groups, for the obscurity of night befriends us, and we may observe them without our presence being suspected. These brown, half-naked men and women who lie around the crackling billets in every attitude of indolence and repose, are *Tzigans*. And in the iron kettle swung over the fire their evening meal is cooking—a mess of grain boiled in water, and stirred with a spoon until it acquires a certain thickness, perhaps to be flavoured hereafter by a savoury slice of onion.

Down there, only a few streets away, is light, and wealth, and civilisation, and there are shining garments and dainties from far-off lands: while here there is only darkness and poverty, shameful rags, and a supper of Indian corn. But to judge by the ringing laughter that is borne across to us, and the merry tongues that are never still even for an instant, these outcasts, who have the damp ground for a bed and the open sky for a roof-tree, are not mourning over the misery of their lot.

What a study for Rembrandt, these dusky

figures crouching in the ruddy glow of the fire-light, with their bare, bronzed limbs and their picturesque tattered draperies ! Might you not meet that old hag with the wrinkled, repellent visage, like a hideous yellow mask, the still glittering eye-balls, and the thin grey matted hair, on the Brocken some weird Walpurgis night ? If you gave her a scarlet cloak, and a steeple-crowned hat, and a bran-new broomstick, would she not be our great-grandmothers' *beau idéal* of a witch, who could bestride her wooden horse and dart through the air, or set to sea in an egg-shell ? And would she not have stood a very good chance of being left to sink or swim in the nearest horse-pond, if she had been caught by any of the faithful subjects of Farmer George ?

Look at that man with the grizzled beard and venerable head, tranquilly gazing into the turbulent flames with dark and dreamy eyes. Is he picturing to himself the mysterious Lotus Land, where his Coptic forefathers trod the banks of the Holy River, or threaded the streets of those mighty cities whose gigantic ruins still rise among

the palm-trees ? Or does he see imaged in the shifting embers, the tangled forests and deadly jungles of far Hindostan, whence his ancestors were banished ages ago, to encumber the earth with their restless misery, and to be pointed at with the finger of contempt and scorn even by the hand of the humblest and most needy citizen ?

Here is a young man with a bold, intrepid air, and the frame of the Egyptian Antinous. There, a tumbling, kicking, confused heap of little, swarthy, curly-headed children, who are wallowing on the ground, in company with their acquaintances the dogs, and their bosom-friend the surly, snouted, smooth-backed pig, who is notifying his impatience for the commencement of the festivities by an occasional sonorous grunt. A matron is stirring the *mamaliga* with a long wooden spoon, while with the other hand she clasps a naked baby against her breast, doubtless a younger brother of the urchins struggling in the dirt. A dozen young girls lounge about in postures of the most unconscious grace ;

their beautiful tangled hair, unconfined by net or handkerchief, flowing wildly over their shoulders ; their black eyes shining with that irrepressible spirit of mocking devilry which is one of the most salient points in the gipsy character ; while their full, voluptuous lips are for ever babbling in that strange, untraceable Romany tongue, whose origin baffles alike the pedant and the proletarian.

These houseless pariahs know that in this unfrequented quarter of the metropolis they are safe from intrusion and insult, and that their repose will be inviolate. The distant roll of carriages faintly reaches their ears, the gleam of wax-tapers shines dimly from the windows of remote palaces, and far away from the noise, the confusion, and the gas-light scenes of a licentious city, the Tzigan, worn with the hard labour of a day among these newly-springing habitations, rests his weary bones upon the parent-earth, and eats his frugal meal of grain, while his naked children swarm over his prostrate body, and make music in his ears with their prattling voices.

The youth with the figure that is a model for a sculptor's studio, and the bold, buccaneering air, flings down his red-clay pipe, and bursts into one of those wild melodies that find such favour with his erratic tribe. We draw nearer, hoping to catch the words of the half-barbaric chant. Why does the lean dog that reposes at the minstrel's feet lift up his head with a low menacing growl as he shakes himself from his indolent slumber? Is he conscious that the tread of the uninitiated is approaching too closely to the hallowed precincts of his roving master's lair? After sitting up a moment, with pointed ears and distended nostril, he lies down again, apparently reassured, resting his muzzle on his paws, while the warm reflection of the firelight seems sending him into a doze. But still uneasy, he once more lifts up his head and gives vent to another growl, this time a louder one and more prolonged. A sycophant on the farther side of the circle barks in a shrill falsetto. The singer ceases, and draws his staff nearer to his side. The women and children look at each other inquiringly. As if by magic the

laughter and the chattering dies into silence, and dozens of flashing black eyes are turned around, vainly seeking to interrogate the darkness.

That unhappy mongrel's bark has awakened fifty sleeping echoes. Shaggy heads are cropping up everywhere, and growls are being rolled out in every key. The matron tosses a fresh resinous log on to the fading embers, and the fire shoots up again in a long wavering jet. A lad throws his arms round the pig's fat neck, and hugs him tightly. Is it conscience that is at work, and does he fear that the peasant, whose sty has been deprived of its chief ornament, may be coming, in company of an *epistatu*, to demand restitution of his property?

The barkings are being kept up with enthusiasm, and several forlorn-looking curs are already advancing towards the spot where we stand lost in obscurity. Cautious and discreet are these noisy aggressors, whose chief valour seems to lie in their lungs; or are they perhaps waiting for reinforcements?

A response to their war-cry is soon made

practically manifest. Dark shadows are rapidly concentrating themselves from all quarters of the open space, on the one point immediately in front of us. Yelping and howling, with their white teeth gleaming and their angry eyes glowing like live coals, they now essay to surround us, plunging and charging wildly. It is time for us to beat a retreat. Our friend with the ear for music has risen to his feet, and stands on the *qui vive* with resolute brow and steady eye. Other dusky figures scramble up and shake their rags out. A naked urchin crawls along by the wall like a lizard, to reconnoitre. We turn to go. The baying camp-defenders, seeing that our intentions are pacific, redouble their clamour, till the whole area reverberates with their furious chorus.

As we retrace our steps along the lonely road, we turn again and again, to cast a farewell glance behind us towards the night encampment of our dusky brethren. When we reach the houses that shut them finally from our sight, we see the ruddy glow of the fires that are being fed afresh,

blazing out of the darkness like giant eyes. We know that the gipsies have again relapsed into slothful ease, and that the evening meal which our intruding presence has delayed, is now being doled out to the united family by the careful mother, who treats the pig to the same allowance of supper as she bestows upon her own swarthy, hungry offspring.





MORALS, MANNERS, AND NATIONAL
CHARACTER.







MORALS, MANNERS, AND NATIONAL CHARACTER.

“**LES** hommes font les lois, les femmes font les mœurs,” says a French writer who, like the majority of his countrymen, is never at a loss for a flashy kind of wit that is always sure of a certain success. If our author’s epigrammatic conceit be true in the abstract, the Roumanian women have much to answer for in regard to the present state of society in the capital.

In Western Europe, amongst those who are cold in clime and cold in blood, the lighthearted Parisian, the gastronomic child of the Boulevards, full of airy, cynical scoffings and ready repartee, who says, “*A cette sauce-là, je mangerais mon*

père!" and who turns everything into ridicule, even grim death itself, is invariably held up to public opprobrium as the ideal type of flippant immorality.

His stage is written down and blushinglly decried by those very critics whose laughter rings loudest in the stalls. His satanic, limp-covered novels are summarily confiscated by the wary mothers of too-curious daughters. His nude Phrynes and Aspasia's are passed in the picture-galleries with downcast eyelids. His comic journals, full of wicked little pencil sketches and racy suggestive dialogue, are not to be mentioned in the same breath with *Punch* the decorous and dull, and *Kladderadatsch* the coarse and vulgar. His fearless, outspoken poets who call a spade a spade, and who make no pretence of writing for the bread-and-butter epoch of existence, are denied a place upon the drawing-room table beside Moody and Sankey's down-plantation nigger hymns and the feeble, twaddling strains of Exeter Hall versifiers, and are banished to some out-of-the-way shelf in the back study, where they are

left to rot in dusty dilapidation, or better still, are flung behind the grate and consumed with fire, as befits such devil's books.

Society shudders and grows cold all over at the bare allusion to one of those sly *double ententes* that in *salons* no less correct on the other side of the "silver streak," cause white bosoms to heave with suppressed laughter, and arch lips to titter behind painted fans.

But what are those milk-and-water sinners, with their sorry parade of matrimonial infidelity, that *feuilletoniste* and playwright attack with pungent raillery, working to death the spectacle of poor, weak, wicked human nature straining after forbidden things, compared to these dissolute descendants of an emasculated people, who are as full of vices as a sieve is full of holes—these frantic worshippers of the voluptuous deity of Paphos, who have not yet shattered upon its pedestal the image of that depraved mother of Bacchus the wine-god, and Priapus the ruler of gardens—these disciples of a fair and cruel divinity whose sway has blasted nations in their

millions, and brought down the conquerors of a world to the chains and abasement of the slave ?

Bucharest is Babylon of the Apocalypse, the Woman clothed in scarlet, with the shameful legend burning on her forehead. These Roman colonists brought other knowledge with them from their mother-country than how to fight and keep the barbarian at bay. They remembered Venus's Stair in the pagan temple, and those frail beauties who had no existence before the law, and who painted their faces with powdered lead and carried polished metal mirrors at their girdles, as they swept down to the baths attended by their female slaves, and who were the venal priestesses of that white mercenary goddess who embraces her lover with one hand, while she extends the other for the price of her favours. And faithful to the traditions of a bygone antiquity, the children of heathen forefathers still adhere to a forgotten worship, and invoke the patroness of the erotic Sappho day and night with ceaseless fervour.

“*Que faites-vous ici, pour vous distraire, madame?*” inquired a new comer of a Roumanian lady celebrated for her wit.

“*On fait l’amour, ou au moins l’on en parle!*” she replied with cynical frankness.

Here is the very pith and marrow of social life in Bucharest; the Alpha and Omega of all terrestrial things; the *idée fixe* that dominates every brain; the axletree upon which the world of fashion is for ever revolving; the mainspring that keeps the whole machinery at work. It is the last passion of which the dull, satiated old Boyard still essays with his scanty breath to rekindle the dying flame—the pet vice that outlives even its fellows, gluttony and gambling. It is the never-tiring pursuit of the adolescent (wrinkled and jaded before his time), in which he lavishes his youth and health and impoverishes his acres. It is the dream of the boy-collegian, a sceptical profligate before the down has come upon his chin.

Could that most complaisant of *diablotins*, Asmodeus, fly up with Don Cleofas above the houses of this “city of pleasure,” the unroofing of

most of its dwellings would cause the young Spanish *caballero* to think more charitably of what he saw in Madrid ; while the lame imp of darkness would burst into wild screeches of hideous laughter, as scene after scene opened before the gaze of the two curious companions.

Although a married lady without a "*cavalière servante*" is as great an anomaly as an elephant without a trunk, or a steamboat without a funnel, the more than lax morality prevalent in Roumania is not so much to be attributed to the innate dissoluteness of the women, as to the contemptuous want of respect with which they are regarded by the men, and which causes them to adapt their morals and manners to the low estimate entertained of their sex by its natural protectors.

That any daughter of Eve can be young and good-looking and still remain chaste, is a paradox reflecting upon his gallantry, that no man of the world can be brought to believe in. The only possible reason for the existence of the feminine creature at all, is to give pleasure and distraction


to her imperious master ; and the feminine creature, with her usual pliant mutability, falls easily enough into the dishonourable place assigned to her.

It is a threadbare truism that women become either angels or fiends, according as they are venerated or abased. It was the respect accorded to parents ; and the honour paid to wives, that produced the mother of the Gracchi and the bride of Collatinus. It was the apotheosis of vice, and the degradation of virtue, that produced Aspasia, the queen-Courtesan, and Messalina, the courtesan-Queen.

A milder phase of that sensual, Oriental selfishness that denies woman both an intellect and a soul, and regards her only in the light of an expensive plaything, to be toyed with or flung aside according to the caprice of the moment, is the foundation upon which the Roumanians base all their intercourse with the sex. Pursued before she is out of her childhood for the material attractions of her youth and beauty ; flattered, fooled, and taken advantage of in her maturer

years for the more solid considerations of her wealth and influence, the woman is continually entering upon a hazardous and unequal contest, in which strength and astuteness on the one hand, opposes itself to weakness and credulity on the other.

The convenient facility with which marriages are made, and unmade, weakens the moral force of the matrimonial bond, and still further deteriorates the tone of society. It is not an uncommon thing to meet with a young woman of four or five and twenty, who has dismissed a husband or two, and who bids fair in the course of time to progress steadily towards the fourth, the maximum allowed by Mother Church ; or a young man in the early summer of life, who is on bowing terms with more than one charming lady who was once bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. There is no longer any sanctity in the home whose members are so scattered and dispersed, and who pass each other as strangers. The husband has but little consideration for the wife of whom he may so easily disembarass himself ; the wife, but



little love for the husband whom she may at any day supplant by a newer favourite. The effect of such separations upon the offspring of these facile marriages cannot be anything else than disastrous. They grow up accustomed to the idea of having several fathers, or several mothers, and brothers and sisters not wholly of their blood. The affections and sacred associations of early home, that green oasis to which the tired traveller through the dreary desert of life, turns tenderly and lovingly his backward glances, are a dead letter to many and many a Roumanian.

The women possess remarkable beauty, of a commanding Oriental type, with lithe, undulating figures and dainty feet. They have a talent of marvellously enhancing their attractions by the aid of art, and it is perhaps owing to this practice that their charms last only for a brief season. Whether it be due to enamels and cosmetics, or to the exciting, exhaustive life they lead, it is very certain that the Roumanian *belles* are already faded and old at an age when other women have hardly come to years of discretion. A girl of

twenty is already past her *première jeunesse*, and at five and twenty is classed among the dowagers.

Dress is the ruling passion of their existence. They carry their mania for finery to an extent elsewhere unknown. No savage decking himself out with his enemies' teeth, or sticking fish-bones in his ears, could be more ambitious of adornment. Not satisfied with Parisian fashions, they invent fashions of their own, and the *couturière* from France and the Jew tailor from Galicia are always sure of employment, let who will lack. Too eccentric for a true *Parisienne*, and yet too tasteful for a Viennese, the Roumanian lady holds an intermediate stage between these two examples in the matter of *toilette*. It is true that the flounces multiply themselves upon her skirts, and that there are as many plumes upon her bonnet as on the back of an ostrich, but still these rich fabrics and bold groupings of colour agree well with the meretricious style of her beauty—a beauty that dazzles and bewilders without possessing any of

that softening, subduing influence which is the most potent spell of feminine attractiveness. These oval visages, with black tresses, flashing glances, and Cleopatra-like air, are in startling contrast to the blonde, pensive Saxon type; it is the garish glitter of day and the mysterious glamour of moonlight—or a dark haughty head of Gorgione beside a pale-haired, dove-eyed sorceress of Greuze.

Gambling is the little amusement that disputes with love-making the possession of youth's rosy hours. *Lansquenet, makau, baccarat*, and twenty others, are the fascinating diversions that ruin one man without enriching his neighbour, and cause Shylock the usurer to flourish in the land like a green bay-tree. They all play, from the shopman who risks his fivepenny-piece, to the minister who stakes his *rouleau* of napoleons, and the stranger within their gates not unfrequently gets infected with the popular endemic and tempts blind Lady Fortune as recklessly as anybody. A Boyard will tell you with the most serious face in the world, that to the last two "occupations" of

the Russians is due the vitality of this canker-worm that is gnawing at that rotten fruit, Society. These friendly enemies, oppressed by the weight of exile and yearning after the *Schloss* and *Vodki* of their native land, first introduced the custom of card-playing into Roumanian *salons* — a custom that has survived their departure, and still nightly turns nearly every drawing-room in the capital into an unlicensed *Kursaal*.

Among the men of education (who have all travelled more or less), one notices many natural gifts and aptitudes. They have an ease of manner and an elegance of exterior quite unattainable by art; a sharp and shrewd apprehension; and a great facility for the acquirement of foreign languages. But to these rare advantages are united an incurable indolence—an inherent taste for dissipation—an effeminate weakness of character—and a vanity absolutely without limit. Every Roumanian is a born diplomatist. He possesses as much *finesse* as the young Austrian Archduchess Marie-Antoinette, when the populace nearly tore her and her boy-husband to pieces in their

enthusiasm, and she chased away the cloud from the jealous old King's brow by a timely exclamation full of delicate tact : " Ah, Sire ! how they must love you ! "

The Roumanians have winning ways, full of attraction. They are brilliant conversationists, with a subtle persuasive eloquence—the stuff of which orators are made who sway the fickle minds of the multitude. With their glib fluency of speech, they can almost convince you that black is white ; but when you come to pull their rhetoric to pieces, you are astonished to find how shallow was the argument, and how superficial the knowledge, that was on the verge of leading your judgment astray. Everything with this people is done for show and effect. They are like the Danish elves, who are only to be looked at from the front, being hollow behind. They eat, move, speak, and debate, as though the eyes of Europe were upon them. They are continually seeking to impress the credulous foreigner with the extent of the riches lying fallow in the bosom of their country, and the

mental superiority of its inhabitants. It is only charitable to suppose, that in attempting to deceive others, they succeed in partially deceiving themselves, for no man in his senses could be an eye-witness to the misery and degradation of the peasant, and the neglected state of the soil, from which a precarious crop springs almost spontaneously, and the total dearth of even the commonest elements of instruction for the masses—and still rank his country in the same category as Germany with her universities, Italy with her art-schools, France with her science and manufactures, and England with her agriculture and commerce.

The Roumanian is proud of the home of his birth. He says "*Sânt Rumun*," in the same spirit as the Hildago's "*Castellano viejo y rancio*." For him, the stretch of earth from the Carpathians to the Danube is the Garden of Europe, the flowery, laughing land of the good God. He is never tired of vaunting its beauties and prognosticating its lofty destinies. Meanwhile the wretched downcast villager scratches

the surface of the ground, and scatters the scanty grain at random, trusting to Heaven and the beneficent spirits that it will come up in due course, and give him and his little ones their daily *mamaliga*; the public finances grow more and more embarrassed from week to week; the deputies go on abusing each other in the Chamber, like so many rival cheap-Jacks; and usury is silently spreading itself like a huge ulcer through every town, and village, and hamlet of the country, eating up whatever is yet sound and wholesome, and corrupting the secret sources of healthy life.

It is literally impossible to be out of temper with one of these amiable deprecating children of pleasure and idleness. He meets your frown with a sunny smile, and your angry movement by a conciliatory bend of his supple body. He excuses himself so plausibly in a flow of honeyed musical words, he takes your arm in his and presses it so gently as he calls you "Brother!" If he had just given arsenic to your best friend, or cheated you

the nation.
"The nation's primary duty is
to preserve the 'servant tra-
dition' which descends from the patri-

cian to the plebeian ! What a difference between the corrupted and lazy dwellers in the capital, and other large centres of a heterogeneous population, and the toiling peasants of the mountain and the plain, who are the real backbone of the Roumanian race !

Inter-marriages with the bastard Greeks who poured into their country in shoals under the abject and ignoble rule of the Phanariot Princes, and their intercourse with the West, of which they have acquired all the profligate vices without acquiring the solid virtues, have nearly stamped the *true* national character out of the greater part of the inhabitants of the cities.

The same is not the case with the peasant, and however much he has suffered, and is suffering still, his noble origin can be traced in unmistakable letters. His robust limbs, and even his attire, recall the figures sculptured upon the column of Trajan, his features the classic type of Cæsar's Rome. But how greatly have the children fallen away from the mighty renown of

their forefathers! Notwithstanding what has been done for them of later years, there is scarcely a people on the face of the earth more oppressed by imposts and taxes, and more taken advantage of by the holders of the soil than the Moldavians and Wallachians—and there are certainly no people that would endure with the same resignation and the same patience one half of the burdens that are laid upon them.

Accustomed as they are to a state of subservience which would appear intolerable to others, they are incapable of realising the idea of a better condition. The moral depression to which they have long been a prey has deepened itself into an apathetic stupor, which renders them indifferent to the enjoyments of life, and insensible to its pains and miseries.


This apathy, which is the base of the peasant character, is a thing which has been repeatedly spoken of by traveller and historian. Here resignation has killed energy. Seeing himself trodden down and oppressed, first in the name of one master and then in the name

of another, from century to century, he has ended in believing that he is pursued by a relentless fate, an inexorable Kismet, against which it would be vain to contend, and so he bows his head and hardens his heart, and makes no effort at all to improve his condition, or assert his independence.

Victim of the stranger who overruns his territory, victim of the Boyard, the Greek, and the Jew who plunder him and appropriate the fruit of his labours, he has nothing but hatred for them all. But if he has lost the martial spirit that once distinguished his race, if he has turned his sword into a ploughshare, the Roumanian has not repudiated altogether the qualities that go to the making of a good soldier—sobriety, discipline, and courage. Something of the valour of the legions still survives in him, though he has acquired a passionate love for the soil of his adoption. He keeps an unwavering faith in the indestructibility of his race. "*Rumun nu pere*," the Roumanian cannot perish, is repeated by Wallachian and Transylvanian, Moldavian and

Bukovinian, as they salute each other by the name of "*Frata*," for the founder of their nation, Trajan, is he not father to all? His remembrance is met with everywhere; in tradition as in legend, in the language, on the mountain summit, in the valley plains, even in the very sky of night and the phenomena of nature. The Milky Way is Trajan's Way; the storm is his voice; the avalanche his thunder; the plain is his camp; the hill-top his tower; the pointed rock his sentinel. He is *The Roman*, that is to say, the man strong and valiant above all others.

The well-bred Roumanian might achieve great things in the political world, where men of his calibre carry all before them, if it were not for his national curse of indolence that makes him prefer the rose-leaf couch of the obscure voluptuary to the broken rest and uneasy pillow of those who make and unmake the fortunes of empires. It is better to be the ignoble shepherd whiling away the useless hours lying prone in the grass, than the monarch in his palace with all the



cares of state upon him and not a moment to call his own. It is better to be the Sybarite crowned with flowers, reposing upon his mistress's bosom, unenvying and unenvied, than Cicero, whose eloquent tongue the she-wolf Fulvia has just transfixed with a nail, as his head hangs up in the Roman Forum for all men to gibe at.







STARLIGHT SLEDGING.








STARLIGHT SLEDGING.

THE Opera is drawing to a close. Mephistopheles, in red tights and pointed shoes, has bargained for the soul of the reckless German student; Faust has squeaked himself hoarse over "*Salve dimora*," and "*Tarde si far*;" and the sufferings of Goethe's blonde Gretchen with the two tails of straw-coloured hair will soon be ended.

It is a pretty little *salle*, this of the *Teatrŭ Nacional*, gay in pale mauve draperies and gilded ornamentation, and one that might successfully vie with others of far greater pretensions in larger cities. It is looking especially brilliant to-night, and flaunts like a vast tulip-bed with the dresses of the ladies, in which red and yellow

predominate, and the scarlet and amber uniforms of the men. Precious jewels are glittering on white necks and glancing in little waxen ears, and charming visages peep out everywhere from the tiers of boxes. For the dark beauty of the Roumanian women is never seen to such advantage as at night-time, when the saffron hue of the brunette softens into creamy white, and the too-piercing lustre of her black Oriental eyes, is toned down to a more subdued gleam under the shadow of heavy fringes.

Looking on this fairy scene, where the magnificence, the luxury, and the fastidious refinements of modern civilisation ostentatiously parade themselves ; this market, where Mammon rattles his gold pieces, and Venus displays her charms ; where there are starry lights and dancing diamonds ; floating odours and flowers made to bloom by art ; low voices of fair women and strains of exquisite music that rise and fall like the sighing of the wind—it is almost impossible for the stranger to believe that within a stone's throw of all these pomps and vanities of a wicked world,



savage degradation lies shivering on its bed on the cold bare ground, and human creatures in the profoundest depths of wretchedness are huddling together like so many unsheltered sheep to pass the bitter winter night under the twinkling stars!


Any one who desires to study the ways of society in the capital, must frequent not only the *Chaussée* and the salons, but the theatre also. Here, as in Spain, the ladies turn their boxes into little drawing-rooms, where they receive their friends and acquaintances, and many a *grande passion* that startles the world by its intensity had its birth between these walls, sacred to the mask and to the lyre; many an intrigue that awakens ridicule by its long duration is fostered in these dainty satin-hung boudoirs.

Here Beauty shows her white teeth in dimpled laughter, and shoots barbed arrows from her sallow-black eyes, above the Cupids and roses of her fan, as she plays with some sallow-complexioned, self-satisfied Lothario, (the terror of fathers and the bugbear of husbands,) that time-worn farce whose

scenes first opened under the leafy groves of Eden, when Madam Eve appeared with all her blandishments to turn the head of our common ancestor.

One fair face, where all are pretty, or look so, viewed at evening by this mellow light, interests us particularly—a Jewish type of loveliness, with features that might have belonged to a Miriam or to an Esther.

A young girl and an elderly man—probably just from a dinner or a *réunion*—have entered a vacant box opposite during the course of the last act, riveting at once our attention. Somehow we feel sure that the bald, military-looking person who has uncloaked the lady so tenderly is her husband, although he seems old enough to be her grandfather, he watches her with such benign pride as she drops into the *fauteuil* he draws back for her, and languidly surveys the house. She has an open, innocent brow, and dark, pathetic eyes, that glance wistfully into space as though they saw happiness a long way off. Occasionally she rouses herself and plays restlessly



with her fan, while she turns her head towards the door. Evidently dispirited and *distracte*, she gives only an abstracted attention to the ceaseless chatter of her companion, as the pale ghost of a smile comes and goes over her delicate lips.

When we cast a look at the box again, a complete change has taken place in our pensive *vis-à-vis*. It is a statue of Memory suddenly transformed into a living figure of Animation. Radiant with smiles and beaming with happiness, she lifts her eloquent pleading eyes up to a slender young man with light, budding moustaches, who leans over her chair, lazily inhaling the perfume of her bouquet, which he appropriates with the *nonchalance* of a privileged being, while the infatuated husband stares through his *lorgnon*, and converses familiarly with the new-comer, as innocent as the babe unborn of the little comedy that is going on under his poor old nose.

Behold, *Messieurs les Dramatistes des Théâtres Français!* here is a subject ready made to your hand, and the *dramatis personæ* conveniently grouped together for your inspection, out of which

material you can fashion one of those charming little wicked pieces, in three acts, that will convulse all Paris with laughter and weeping! Don Alphonso, sixty-five and grey; Doña Julia, twenty and romantic; and Don Juan, a handsome strippling with a heart—there is nothing more needed than Antonia, the *soubrette*, to convey the three-cornered notes in her bodice, and hide the young gentleman in the closet. As we watch the suggestive trio—two persons of whom are at this moment in an enchanted region of their own, where no profane presence can intrude—Heine's rhyme is running in our head. It is "*das alte Liedchen*," the old, old story that never tires, and that rings so sweetly, and has so sad a finale—ending, in nine cases out of ten, in broken hearts and broken heads.

The performance is done at last; the curtain rolls down, and we cross the slippery Piata to our lodgings. The moon is pouring her silvery light over the sparkling, snow-laden roofs and the dumb white streets, across which the abrupt shadows of the tall houses fall black and men-

cing. It was on such a night as this that naughty little Jessica ran away from Venice with Lorenzo, and the damsel unrobed by the soft glory streaming through the stained window, on the Eve of St. Agnes, sticking the mystic pins all a-row on her silken sleeve, as she repeated a prayer to the Virgin Saint who shows young maids the faces of their lovers in a dream.

Once within doors, the Major peremptorily forbids candles, and draws up the blinds, letting in a flood of sublime radiance.


"It is a shame to even speak of bed," he says after a pause; "what do you think of a turn on the Chaussée?"

The proposal is received with loud acclamations, for nobody is sleepy, and we rush away to prepare. And then comes such a tying, and wrapping, and buttoning up, that one would believe we were bound for the North-West Passage at least.

We receive the Major with profound bows as he emerges from his room, transformed into a Russian swell of the first order. He has a round cap of silver-shaded beaver, and a wonderful

cloth pelisse, lined with blue fox, which he bought at Monaco for an old song, of an impecunious Muscovite. Madame has her head enveloped in one of those cosy knitted *capuchons*, all over smart little ribbons, which the Roumanian ladies sometimes wear out of doors, instead of bonnets, in cold weather; and we others have rough Ulsters of Irish frieze above our swallow-tails, warm *caçiulas* of black Astracan, and felt slippers over our patent-leathers, while Jack is further adorned by what he calls his "ikey" muffler, a hideous red foulard, striped with black bars like a gridiron. We take a *petit verre*, to keep out the cold, and then we shout to the two neatest sledges on the rank, whose drivers look like stuffed sacks tied in the middle.

We tuck ourselves up in the little double-seated conveyance, Jack standing on the narrow foot-board behind (sacred to the footman who watches over his mistress, or the lover who wishes to whisper soft nothings in his *inamorata's* ear), and dash away after the Major, who has a sledge all to himself, where he poses




with solemn grandeur, in all the dignity of his Boyard's furs.

We shoot over the snowy road at a pace that you can get out of no horse in harness excepting a native one. Small, wiry, and impetuous, almost beyond restraint, this breed of animals was formerly held in as much esteem as the fleet and nervous coursers of the Arabian desert, the hardy mustangs of Central America, and the pack-mules of the Spanish Peninsula. When the late King of Denmark wished to start a stud-farm in Jutland, he selected the mares from Moldavia, and adopted the same mode of bringing up the foals as that in vogue in the province. Frederick the Great was in the habit of choosing the horses here for his army, and Hungary and Poland used also to recruit their stables from the renowned Roumanian pastures. Turkey too formerly mounted her soldiers by purchases and requisitions made in this country, and a proverb still extant among the Faithful says, "Nothing can excel a Persian rider and a Moldavian horse." This race, so highly eulogised

by Prince Cantemir in his description of *Moldavia*, written at the beginning of the last century, has almost entirely lost its ancient reputation in Europe, although some of its remarkable qualities are yet perceptible. Of late years a certain number of landed proprietors have turned their attention to stud-farming, for the most part with complete success, the colts fetching as much as seventy or eighty pounds each.

How delightful and invigorating is this quick passage through the sharp, frosty air, as we rush along, to the jangling music of a hundred round brass bells that shake all in unison, sending the light dust of snow flying up in a feathery cloud ! Sometimes the horses plough through the loose drift, in which they sink above their knees at every step ; at others we slide over a smooth surface of ice that makes the street seem like the frozen course of a river. The sprightly accompaniment of the bells, the cold stinging kisses of the wind, and the bejewelled, star-spangled canopy of heaven stretched overhead, seem not only to elevate our own spirits, but those of our



conductors also, whose heightened cheerfulness betrays itself in stimulating yells to the already tearing horses, and audacious sarcasms levelled at the passing sledges, while reverberating cries of "*Dreapta!*" "*Stinga!*" the last vowel being prolonged to an indefinite length, warn advancing vehicles to get out of our way either to right or left.

Lights are brilliantly shining in the windows of the houses as we dart down the long straight Strada Mogoşoi and gain the open country. Now our steeds seem to have wings like the fabled Pegasus, as Nişa and Petrachi shake the reins wildly over their backs, uttering savage, exciting cries, and turning round to us with flashing, exultant glances, as the maddened horses burst into an uncontrollable gallop, flinging the hard frozen pellets they detach from the road by the blows of their hoofs high up aloft in the starlight air. We hold on to the sides of the sledge, while Jack sticks on behind with an adroitness that would have made him an unrivalled acrobat.

There is a delicious sense of excitement, coupled with a little spice of danger, that makes this nocturnal ride a thing to be remembered.

Now our steaming horses subside into a rapid trot, and we insensibly recall Edgar Poe's verses, which must have been penned in a Canadian sledge, to the very jingle of the silvery bells which seem to be still ringing in his lines. We pass many sledging parties, whose merry jest and laughter, and the smoke of whose fragrant cigarettes, reach us upon the wind; and some sentimental couples spooning in the moonlight, quiet as mice.

A sledge with red and blue *aigrettes* on the horses' heads, and a long floating cloth with a coronet in the corners, comes gliding swiftly by us. In the light, bright as day, we see the pale patrician face of our young lover of the opera-box, and, nestling up into the arm that encircles her, we have no difficulty in recognising the same beautiful lady who so impatiently awaited his coming. A shawl is gathered up about her little mouth, and the fringe of her hood hangs over her

forehead, but still we could single her out among a thousand by those lustrous, melancholy eyes, full of such intense and passionate expression. We wonder not a little by what cunning subterfuge, this extremely imprudent couple got rid of the tiresome old goose of a husband, who is doubtless at this moment peacefully snoring away under an eider-down quilt, happily unconscious of the *escapades* of his faithless spouse.

The Major's sledge stops abreast of ours at the top of the Chaussée, to give our panting horses a moment's breathing-time. We indulge in a lively interchange of repartee, and a pull at Jack's pocket-flask, which he produces amid general exultation, for the clear lovely night is dreadfully cold, and the keen air has penetrated our thick garments and chilled us to the bone.

We start off in a trot again. Past the wide outspread plain, where the ice-crystals glisten in the moonlight, like Sinbad's Valley of Diamonds ; past the white spectral trees, with their gaunt arms flung wildly up to the sky ; past the deserted villas, with the snow lying in the gardens in

some places as deep as a man's body, while we hear the Major, on ahead, singing a bucolic song, famous in the days of his youth, to the intense satisfaction of Nița, who keeps turning round and laughing at him encouragingly, although he does not understand a single word of it.

"*Haide sacagiu !*" (Out of the road, water-carrier !) screams Petrachi, with vindictive derision, nearly upsetting an unfortunate Roumanian driver (whose fraternity is the constant butt of the more skilful Russian coachmen), as he suddenly takes it into his head that our sledge shall lead the way, and accordingly swerves out of the Major's wake with unforeseen abruptness.

The insulted native, stung to the quick by the imputation cast upon his horses and vehicle (the water-carriers having lumbering little carts and stiff-jointed, worn-out animals, whose age and infirmities prevent their moving beyond a walking-pace), lashes his pair of bays into a gallop, in a futile attempt to catch up the scoffer, and perchance administer him a lesson of politeness with the whip. But a tortoise might as well try to

amid a shower of leaping sparks! We gather round the fire with blooming cheeks and eyes that dance in light, for the nipping air and the exhilarating exercise have set them shining with the lustre of stars, and the warm blood flowing in our veins to a merry tune.

Could any bumper of famed Falernian equal the delicious flavour of this steaming *Tchai*, which the Major concocts like a veritable artist, pouring it into tumblers, perfuming it with the aroma of fragrant lemons, and dashing it with a suspicion of white Jamaica rum?

If anybody wishes to realise the acmé of earthly enjoyment—a pleasure more intense than any quick thing with the hounds, than any valse with a Viennese partner, than any floating on the Thames at Henley, when the scent of the hay is in the air—if he would realise to the uttermost the "*mens sana in corpore sano*," let him pick a fine night in December, and a Russian driver, and go sledging by starlight on the *Chaussée* at Bucharest, returning home to a glass of hot tea brewed by one of the initiated.



**MONEY-LENDING ISRAEL IN THE
EAST.**







MONEY-LENDING ISRAEL IN THE EAST.

THE waiter brings us our breakfast as usual. He puts down a little jug of coffee, and a little jug of hot milk before each of us. He adds the ordinary dish of eggs in a snowy napkin, and the cream in a scallop-shell, and the rolls that are baked to a golden brown.

And over and above these he lays a folded paper by the plate at the head of the table. Eyes look up inquiringly over the damp sheets of the *Telegrafulu*.

"*Votre compte, messieurs !*" says the Swiss varlet, bowing himself out, tray in hand.

We chip our eggs amid the most profound

silence. The clock upon the bureau has ticked merrily on, until it has reached the *mauvais quart d'heure* of Rabelais. We have kept pace with the music, and our feet have sped lightly in the jocund dance, and now the moment has come when they call upon us to pay the piper. It is the old story of Damocles over again, who has laughed, and feasted, and cracked his jokes under the shadow of the sword that trembled above his head on a single hair, and has clean forgotten its very existence, until the frail support suddenly snaps in twain, and he feels the sharp steel penetrating his flesh.

We unfold the dreaded document at last. It is long, and blue, and narrow. It has two columns of figures that go into hundreds of francs. There is a frightful condensation of items at the bottom, and the total looks appalling. It is evident that our host has the talent of Thénardier the *aubergiste*, who charged his unlucky visitor for the wear and tear of the mirror which he looked in to dress by, and the flies which his dog snapped at and swallowed.

We turn our pockets out to see the state of the exchequer. The Major has a bundle of dirty little paper bills and some bran-new napoleons; we have a few Austrian notes and a few German, six two-*lei* pièces and a Turkish *lira*, the whole amounting to about five pounds; while Jack fumbles in his pockets (of which he has at least a dozen), and brings out a franc and a half in coppers, a lucky sixpence, a tossing penny, a dog-whistle, a corkscrew, a railway-key, a silver match-box, a briarwood pipe, and a cube of billiard-chalk.

We hold a counsel of war. The Major wishes to wait for remittances before we leave the hôtel, and Jack expresses his conviction that we ought to try and get into lodgings at once, as we are living at somewhere about the same rate as Baron de Rothschild or the Duke of Westminster.

This difference of opinion is cut short by our old friend carefully brushing his hat, remarking that it is a fine day, and going off for a walk.

“Jack,” we say reflectively, some hours after,

“ Jack, do you remember that man we met at *Hrchaska's* the other night ?”

Jack stops in the act of filling his pipe, and gives one of his merry shouts of laughter.

“ That little cad with the turquoise chain, and diamond fly studs ? Why, whatever makes you think of *him* ?”

We draw a limp card, highly glazed, from our pocket-book, and throw it across the table.

“ Will you be good enough to read that aloud ?”

He looks at us wonderingly and complies :

“ S. MOISESCU,

“ BANCHIERU.”

“ Friend Jack,” we say, rising, and reaching down our hat from its peg, “ you hold in your hand the card of our mutual acquaintance, Mr. Solomon Moses, banker and usurer, of this town, with whom we exchanged compliments yesterday over a glass of beer, and whom we are now about to visit for the first time under circumstances of

a delicate nature connected with our hotel bill.


Entends-tu, mon garçon ?

“All right !” he replies briefly ; “where’s my *caçiula* ?”

Turning into a dingy court out of the Podu Mogoşoi, we ascend a flight of steps, and find ourselves before a door with a huge brass plate, whereon is engraven the name of S. Moisescu. A bell rings on the floor above as we enter. We go up the broad staircase covered with matting, and lined with oleander trees in tubs. We reach a landing where a plate, similar to that below, indicates the person whom we are seeking. We are met on the threshold by a smart youth of the conventional Hebraic type. He takes away our cards while we stand looking about us. This gaudy antechamber bears no resemblance to some of the dirty dens we have heard of in London. Turkish divans in green velvet are scattered invitingly about, there are ornamental pots and a few stunted flowerless plants, chairs, and a table for the youth ; but no paper, or books, or any sign of business.

The door of the next room is open, and we see two gigantic iron safes and a bookcase, that take up a couple of sides of the apartment. Mercury returns after a minute or so. Dnu. Moisesescu will be delighted to see the young English gentlemen. We walk in accordingly. Our acquaintance of the *Hrchaska* Gardens comes forward to greet us. A very dazzling creature in the light of day is this affable Hebrew. We admire (although we covet not) his satin waistcoat, and deep velvet cuffs, and embroidered linen, and geranium tie. Our olfactory nerves are pleasantly tickled by the smell of frangipanni that hangs all about his resplendent person. He waves us into the inner sanctum with a stumpy finger on which scintillates a starry cluster of diamonds. He smiles upon us perpetually with the whitest of teeth, and overwhelms us with compliments in German-French. And from time to time he gives a sharp glance out of the corner of his eye, betraying unmistakably that he is up to every move upon the board.

He claps his hands for the inevitable coffee and



the *dultea* that give us the toothache only to look at it. We chatter amicably while we empty the little vessels that are no bigger than egg-cups, and are full of black sediment at the bottom. Our host is courteous, and very curious. How do we like Bucharest? The Corso? The Theatre? He entertains us with the current scandal of the day, and some of his stories make Jack (who is a shy fellow) look rather queer. At length we arrive at the calumet of peace. We have now done with Frou-Frou, the dancer of pirouettes, and Lea, the singer of comic songs. With the blue fragrant clouds that are beginning to settle over the comfortable little Turkish chamber, and through which we see each other as in a mist, comes gravity and serious talk. The moment has arrived for us to broach the subject of our visit. This duty devolves upon us, as Jack, struggling with a foreign language, and deprived of the racy idiom in which he conveys the few ideas he may be said to possess, is a sight to move the Gods to pity.

“We came here to-day to see if you could let

us have a little money, Domnu Moisescu," we began with insular abruptness.

Our usurer, who is all attention, declares that nothing in the world could possibly give him greater pleasure than to serve us. Will we please go on ?

"You see," we explain, "we want to pay our hotel bill and get into lodgings, but we have not got sufficient cash, so we thought you might be able to assist us to do it, until we can receive remittances from home."

Certainly, certainly. There is nothing easier in life. And what security, may he ask, are we prepared to give him ?

"Well, we were thinking of our joint signature. This gentleman" (pointing to Jack) "has a rich father, a very well-known man. He would draw on him, and I would endorse the bill to your order."

Our usurer shakes his head. "Is that all you have to offer?" he inquires.

All! A flush mounts to Jack's forehead, and our right foot begins to twitch uneasily.


"A gentleman's name is generally considered the best security he *can* give," we reply coldly.

The Jew smiles his oleaginous smile, and seems not a whit put out.

"Not in this country, monsieur, not in this! Do not be angry, my dear young friend" (confound his impudence!) "If you had seen what *I* have seen of the value of the signatures of some men, whom Society calls *gentlemen*, you would not wonder at my considering *that* species of security in the light of no security at all. Are you aware," he pursues, "that there actually exists in certain bankers' offices of this town, printed lists of names (some of them the highest and oldest in the Principality) that have been dishonoured over and over again, both here and abroad, until no money-lender who is in his senses would give a *lira* for a cart-load of them?"

We represent to him that all this may be perfectly correct, but yet we do not see what it *has* to do with *us*.

"Nothing, monsieur," says Mr. Moisescu, "absolutely nothing. Personally, I am convinced



that if I were to accept your bill, I should be as safe as if I held a bond of the Government, perhaps more so. But our trade never enters into these kind of transactions, or so very rarely that it may almost be called a rule without exceptions. We are afraid of them, you know. Law in Roumania is very tedious and very expensive. Besides, everything that creditors could lay hands upon, is invariably settled upon the wife. I could tell you an amusing story of a Boyard who actually *swallowed* his signature for five hundred ducats when it was presented to him for payment, and kicked the clerk out of the house, saying he owed him nothing—but it is rather long.”

Mercury comes in and announces a lady. Our Jew rises, and begs us to excuse him for a moment. He goes into the next room without closing the door, so that we cannot help hearing what is going on, although we try not to listen.

Madame something or other has come to discount her Government pension with Mr. Moisescu. They have a long confabulation, in-

terraptured by pathetic remonstrances from the lady.

"Çe!" she exclaims, "you will give me two hundred and twenty-five ducats in cash, for which you will draw my pension of five hundred ducats for a whole year, and I must insure my life for double the amount, and give you the policy, and you also want the pension assigned to you! Your terms are very hard, *Domnule*, very hard indeed!"

Jack looks at us with a grimace of disgust. "Let's get out of this thieves' den," he whispers; "I feel I can't breathe properly here!"

"Wait a little," we reply. "There is something to be learnt worth knowing."

Our Jew comes back, his shiny round face beaming with affability.

"That will not be a very *profitable* piece of business," he says, sliding down into his easy-chair, and pointing with his thumb in the direction of the other room, "but it will be a *safe* one. It's Government security, and Government generally pays in the long run!"

The shades of evening are descending, and the light is already dim in the cosy sanctum with the luxurious divans. We see our companion, deep among the cushions, puffing away like one of the Faithful, while our host pulls at a big Havannah, that obstinately refuses to draw. He lays his cigar down at last, rests his elbows upon the arms of the chair, and clasps his two little fat hands together as he looks first at Jack and then at us.

"Messieurs," he says, waxing confidential in the twilight, "usury is generally considered a lucrative sort of business in any country, and here it experiences no exception to the rule. As you are strangers, perhaps you might be interested to hear about a rather curious condition of things in this city, connected with the money-lending profession. Whereas in other places on the Continent borrowers may be counted by twos and threes in a street, here everybody, almost without exception, has recourse to the usurer. Widows discount their pensions, officers forestall their pay, clerks anticipate their salaries, and farmers, the realisation of their harvests. The

wearers of uniform are among our best clients. They will give a franc a day for each napoleon when they want to try their luck at cards. But it is customary with us, under such circumstances, not to lend more than twenty, or five and twenty napoleons at a time. They have to give their *parole d'honneur* that the money will be refunded, and it is only fair to say that we never, or very seldom, lose by them. The Prince protects us indirectly by his well-known punctiliousness in regard to the honour of the service, which causes the officers to be very careful to avoid a scandal. Sometimes when one of them comes after a napoleon or two, we make him leave his *sword* with us until he calls and pays the next day ; but this is only when we have got hold of a doubtful customer. From the *sous-lieutenant* to the general, they all borrow, but the latter usually patronises larger establishments than mine."

Mr. Moisescu brings his cigar-case out of his breast pocket and lights another Havannah. After taking a few whiffs, he resumes :

“We lend a good deal to *employés* on the strength of their salary, for, as I have already said, everybody spends his income in Bucharest before he gets it. Eighty to ninety francs we consider is a fair sum to give for a month's salary of two hundred francs, and for larger *appointements* the amount is at the same ratio. These sort of transactions never extend beyond six months; if by special arrangement they are made for a longer period, they have to be paid for accordingly. Here is one of the safest branches of the business. It is true that we are a little out of pocket by the *douceur* we give the cashier who pays the salary, in order that he may hand it to us directly it falls due, but that is unavoidable. The assignment of an *employé's* salary is notified by him to his cashier in a letter which he gives to us when he takes the borrowed money, and which also contains his receipts for the pay he has discounted, though we never have any difficulty with the cashiers, who are, almost to a man, customers of ours.”

“But what if the borrower gets dismissed from

his employment before you are paid?" we inquire, much interested.

"Then," replies Dnu. Moisesescu, "my security becomes worthless; but the money is never forfeited. The debtor is *certain* to faithfully discharge his liability, as he knows very well that if he left any one of us in the lurch, it would be spread directly throughout the whole profession, and he would never be able to raise a single copper again, even if he were in the greatest extremity."

"Are there many money-lenders in Bucharest?" asks Jack.

"There are some hundreds," answers our informant; "many of whom are Greeks and Armenians. I myself am from Lemberg in Galicia. We Jews are considered more respectable, and are more moderate in our charges, than those of any other nationality in the same line of business. There are different degrees of extension in this trade, as in all. You will find men who lend money by a few francs here and there; others who, like myself, are in a moderate way; others again who can afford to give out their thousand napoleons at a

time. All those petty bankers and money-changers, whose places of business you may have noticed on the Podu Mogoşoi, in the Lipscanie, and the Strada Nemţeasca, are merely so many usurers. I myself have no office, and there are legions like me, who pursue the same calling in private. I should not be far wrong if I said that nine-tenths of the smaller *Bacani*, who are nearly all Greeks, do a greater trade in lending money than they do in selling olives, caviar, candles, sugar, and Turkish slippers."

Our Hebrew pauses a minute, and plays with the diamond ring that glitters upon his finger.

"Perhaps you will be surprised," he continues, "to learn what social advantages we money-lenders enjoy here in Roumania, you who come from England, where one of my trade is not considered a fit associate for a gentleman. I am on the best of terms with my principal clients, some of whom are among the first men in the country. They are always very glad of my company to drive with them on the *Chaussée*, and their wives and daughters welcome me with the warmest cordiality

when I choose to join their circle of an evening—for they know very well that if they are to wear their necklaces and tiaras at the next court ball, it will only be by my grace in unlocking those iron drawers over yonder, and giving them out of my custody for a night.

“I regret, gentlemen,” says our usurer, rising and bowing to us politely, “that it is out of my power to be of any use to you, as, to repeat what I have said before, I never meddle with bills. If you have any precious stones, or plate (though being *en voyage* of course that is not likely), or any other article of sterling value, I shall be happy to accommodate you, whenever you like to apply to me, with cash at the reduced rate of four francs a napoleon per month, and you may repay me whenever you like, because you are Englishmen—a nation for which, in a commercial point of view, I entertain the highest admiration and respect.

“You need never be afraid of my realising any security you might leave with me; those two safes you may have observed in the other room


are filled with all kinds of jewellery, and although I never advance more than a third of the value, and insist upon having a letter containing the penal clause of forfeiture from my clients if the loan be not repaid within one month, I make a point of never taking the least advantage of it, so long as the interest agreed upon is forthcoming."

He accompanies us to the door with many bows and smiles, and insists upon shaking hands with both of us, Jack giving him two limp fingers with manifest reluctance.

We go down the staircase in silence, sadder and wiser men.

It is only when we are fairly in the street that Jack opens his mouth.

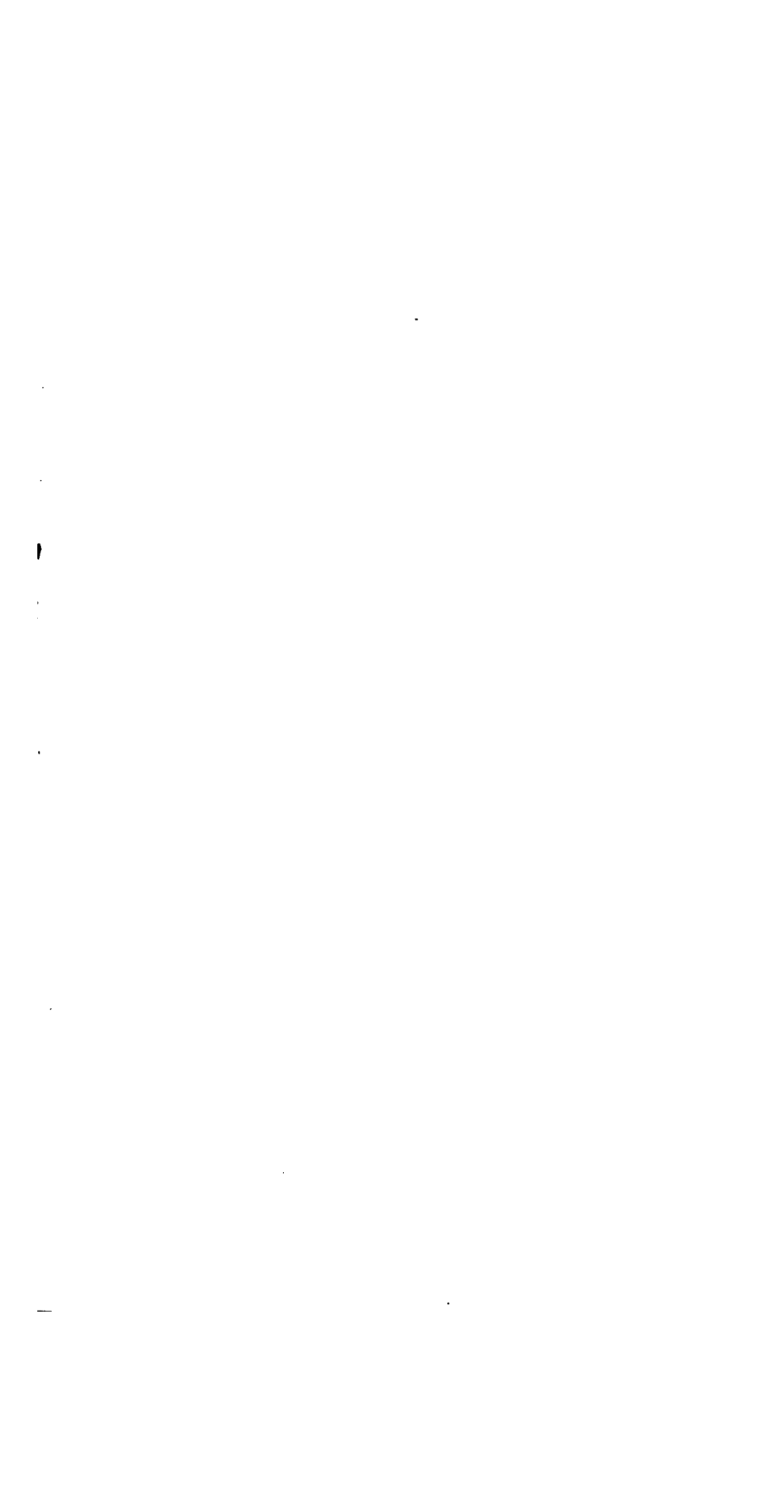
"Well, of all the cool beggars——" he says, with intense expression. And this is all that he does say.





A BOYARD'S FUNERAL PROCESSION.







A BOYARD'S FUNERAL PRO- CESSION.

A GREAT man "died o' Wednesday"
—one of those lords of the soil who
hold the peasant in bondage, and
lay a tax upon the teeming acres, and keep
him down at starvation-pitch, both in body and
soul.

We remember the pinched, faded, yellow features of the rich Boyard, as he went by in his closed-up chariot, enveloped in costly furs. What a world of weariness was in those dull, lack-lustre eyes, that looked neither to right nor left! Poor sick, satiated old Dives in purple and fine linen, was more an object of compassion than hungry Lazarus, who

stretched a lean hand for alms outside his palace-gates.

But now Death has knocked at the door of the princely mansion, and has perchance received a not unkindly welcome. For to the millionaire, as to the beggar, there comes a moment when jaded mind and worn-out body both clamour for repose, and prayers go up for the advent of that mildest herald, who :

“ Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand,
To lead us, with a gentle hand,
Into the land of the great Departed,
Into the Silent Land !”


Already on the day of his demise, invitations on black-edged paper, decorated with allegorical figures indicative of mourning and woe, have been sent out to his relatives and friends, and even to the public at large. A poor art it is that designs these huge lithographed sheets, one of which now lies before us, an emanation from the pencil of some German artist unknown to fame. Big fat tear-drops, a chubby angel (overladen with drapery to hide ignorance of anatomy) weep-

ing above a funeral urn, under what is presumably a cypress tree, and reversed torches *ad libitum*, make up the sum of this missive of desolation.

We went yesterday to see the corpse—which was lying in state in the principal salon. Arras of sable and silver draped the walls from floor to ceiling. The steps that led up to the bier, where the body lay in the middle of the room, were strewn with the choicest hot-house flowers. Piercing shrieks and hysterical wailings broke upon our ears as we entered into the chamber. The *pleureuses* (women principally of the Gipsy class, hired to cry and lament over the dead) were wringing their hands and tearing their hair, and rending their garments in true Biblical fashion. They were chanting an improvised elegy on the virtues and remarkable qualities of the defunct (like the *Mortualia*, or laudatory dirges with which the Romans were wont to propitiate the manes of their departed relatives), interrupting themselves from time to time in order to give vent to a loud sob, or some other violent demon-

stration of grief. If it had been a female who had been lying dead, her beauty also would have been eulogised, and her charms recapitulated in detail. With poor persons, this disagreeable business is relegated to the family, who take turns in the representation, as it is no trifling matter to keep the enthusiasm up to the proper height, and if the chorus gets exhausted, and the performance hangs fire, the effect on the public is of course materially lessened. What struck us as being rather a comic feature in the entertainment, was that in the very ecstasy of their woe, these lugubrious ladies never failed to impress upon the admiring bystanders, the fact that the expenses of the funeral could not possibly amount to less than five hundred napoleons.

To-day is the day of the interment. We sit at the window, prepared for the great sight of which all the town has been talking. Black cloth hangings, emblazoned with the arms and initials of the deceased Boyard, cover the façade of the mansion; two enormous cardboard shields with



similar decorations are leaning against each side of the entrance-gate. The pavements and houses are thronged with curious spectators; the street is blocked up by the head and tail of the procession. We just catch a glimpse of the coffin as it is borne reverently out and laid upon the car, and then the long tangled *cortège* begins slowly to unwind itself, and defile at walking-pace underneath our windows.

A troop of gendarmes in glittering steel helmets and breast-plates to match, joined by a squadron of cavalry, their naked swords tied with crape at the hilt, come first into sight, clearing the way as they move along. Then appear two companies of infantry with reversed rifles, and black badges upon their arms; the band of the regiment marching in front with muffled drums and brass instruments shrouded in crape. Close behind them totter the *pleureuses*, filling the air with heart-rending cries, and tearing their dishevelled tresses in agony, followed by a group of forty or fifty *Laoutars* with *kopsas*, and violins, and reed-pipes galore, their dark eyes and long

black hair, innocent of comb and brush, betraying their Gipsy origin.

Hark to those fresh young voices welling up in a sweet and solemn flood of harmony ! Here come the chorister boys accompanied by their teachers, filling the air with the deep melancholy chant of the Greek Church bewailing her dead. Now the clergy are swarming by—an innumerable host. All dressed in their best clothes, driving in *birge*, two and three together, and nursing gorgeous pictures of saints in real gold and silver frames upon their knees. We count two hundred of these *popas* as they file slowly on, and then get tired and leave off, there are so many still to come. Then a crowd of clerical swells leading the way for His Holiness the Metropolitan, who is a venerable old man with a beard as white as the snow-drift. How majestic he looks in that tiara, all incrustated with shining pearls, and that cross hanging round his neck studded with every precious stone under the sun, and that magnificent pastoral staff reposing at his side !

Mutes in black, with long scarves falling from



their hats down to the pavement beneath, come carrying between every pair of them a cake the size of a cart-wheel. Others similarly attired are bearing trays filled with votive tapers, to be left in the church as the perquisites of the officiating priests—who sell them back to the dealers again, and so reap a not inconsiderable harvest.

A goodly congregation of Blessed Saints, from Sft. Demetriu and Sft. Nicolai downwards, are being borne in front of the hearse, that has now fallen into its place in the procession. Not the least attractive part of the display are these “counterfeit presentments” of the righteous, as, with flowing beards and soft dark eyes, they gaze out of their frames of precious metal, wondering no doubt who was the great Boyard whose fortuitous dissolution had procured for them this unusual airing. See the attendants holding out cushions of red velvet at arms’ length, upon which are ranged the orders and decorations of the dead man! One would think that he belonged to every institution of every court in Europe, so numerous are these ribands and crosses, the


description of which alone, would take up two pages of the *Almanach de Gotha*.

Every head is bent forward, and every voice is hushed, as the ponderous car of death now rolls into sight, bearing the worthless relics of one who but a few hours ago, was an influence and a power. Eight beautiful horses, all covered with nodding plumes and black velvet trappings spangled with silver tears, are being led, each with a mute in gold and sable at his bridle-rein, while throngs of other mutes press round the carriage, holding long torches that flare wildly in the wind.

On the hearse, which is surmounted by a richly-gilded canopy supported by four pillars, in a coffin lined with white satin, under a lid of glass, lies all that is mortal of a great patrician.

Four young Boyards, faultlessly got up, stand one at each corner of the car. They hold on to the pillars of the canopy, and keep their equilibrium with difficulty, as they go jolting over the unequally laid stones of the street.

The male members of the family, the friends,




and *protégés* of the deceased, together with such of the public as desire to honour him in death, follow on foot immediately behind the body. An Aide-de-camp of the reigning Prince in a court carriage, all the Ministers and public functionaries, also in carriages, and a multitude of officers in rainbow uniforms. Diplomatic agents, consuls, and vice-consuls, scores of Boyards, accompanied by ladies coquettishly decked out in the last new imported fashion, rustling in silks and gleaming in jewels. Then the vast procession (that has taken a good half hour to pass our windows) is wound up by an interminable string of the little street victorias, driven by our friends the Russian *birjars* and crammed with idle loungers, who avail themselves of this special opportunity to parade their latest finery under the eyes of the assembled spectators as they crawl along at a snail's gallop.

Dust to dust, ashes to ashes! Peace to the dead man as he rolls away on his last stately ride! May the memory of the evil he may have wrought in the course of a long lifetime be blotted

out of all living minds, even as a tracing upon the sand of the shore is effaced by the washing of the sea ! And may his good deeds alone be perpetuated in letters of gold upon tablets of bronze !

The use of carriages at Roumanian funerals, as a means of locomotion for the mourners, is quite of recent date. Perhaps one of the many results of the influx of foreigners who sojourn awhile, and depart, and leave the influence of their customs behind them. Formerly it was only women who rode to an interment, the men invariably being on foot.

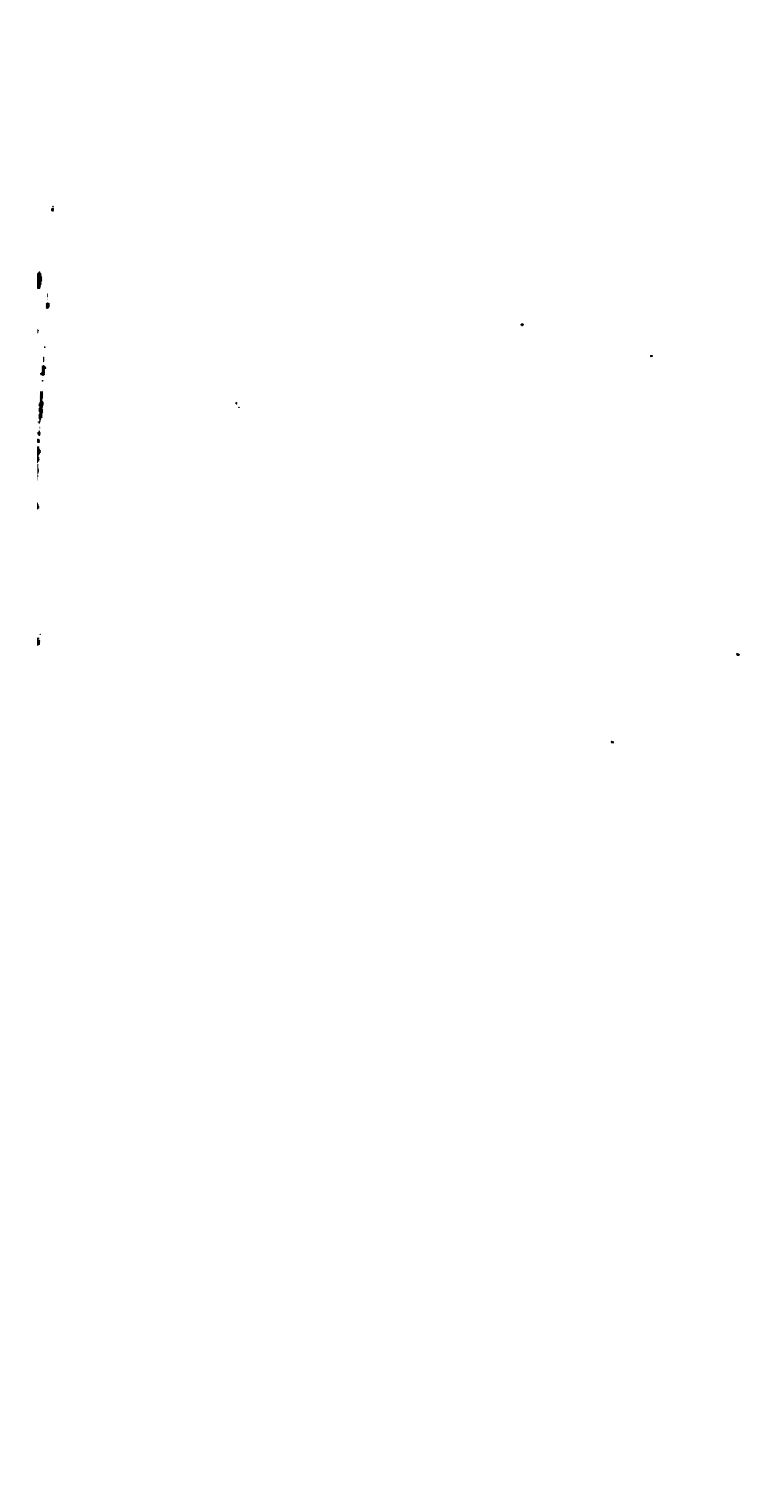
Wax candles are distributed, not only in large quantities to the attendants and clergy, but also singly to every person accompanying the corpse from the residence, and these tapers are to be seen in the hand of each acquaintance who helps to swell the procession. This custom prevails even among the very poorest, so that lights being in such constant demand, there are certain commercial streets consisting almost wholly of chandlers' shops. Such is the end of the *Procesion de Lips-*



canie, the Strada Carol I., and the Piața Sft. Antoane.

It is only during these latter times that the classic custom of carrying the corpse through the streets, uncovered and exposed to the gaze of the curious, has been finally abandoned. With the in-coming of the great wave of refinement and civilisation, that is gradually sweeping Eastward from the West, obliterating ancient landmarks, and bearing down many a time-honoured edifice, old habits are falling into oblivion, and the new generation is forsaking the statutes of its forefathers, while the educated *Rumun* is growing from day to day more into the likeness of his brother and prototype, the nervous, sensitive, and keen-witted Parisian.

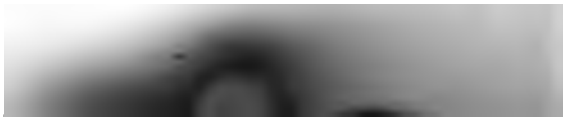






ABOUT MANY THINGS, CHIEFLY
LUGUBRIOUS.







ABOUT MANY THINGS CHIEFLY LUGUBRIOUS.

THERE was once a young person in America who expressed an artless wish that life could be "all beer and skittles." We have often pondered over the desires of this material youth, and have come to the conclusion that he did not know what he was talking about. Just pause a moment, and reflect what existence would be worth, if it were all—well, to put it in a more elegant manner—billiards and Bordeaux. How sick you would grow of the sight of those red and white balls aimlessly meandering about the green baize cloth, how the glare of the gas would irritate your sensitive optics, how you

would long to strip off your jacket and pitch into the marker in the faithful discharge of his duty and give him a good drubbing, if only by way of a change ! What a filthy, nauseous black-draught flavour would hang about the bumpers of Chateau-Margaux, and would you not give a whole cellarful, if you had it, for a drink of cool limpid water, fresh from some source that bubbles and gurgles up between the shady rocks ?

One can picture to one's self the heartless old Grand Monarque seated at table in his high-heeled shoes and stupendous periwig (without which no one ever saw him, not even his valet), and all the artificial bombastic airs that have gained for him the reputation of being the best-bred man in Europe. We can see fat florid Maître de Saint-Remy whip the cover off the dish with a flourish, showing the little brown partridges the King hates so, lying upon their backs on slices of toasted bread. We can see the withered jaw drop, and the nerveless fingers begin drumming a tattoo upon the lid of the diamond snuff-box, as le Roi Soleil


mutters despairingly, "*Perdrix, toujours perdrix !*"

Note that cloud coming down over the brow of the joyous Ovid, as he reclines at the festal board, with his head lying on the bosom of his friend and beloved condisciple, Tibullus. It is in vain that the blonde Corinna has put on her most killing tunic. It is in vain that the odorous amphora exhales its seductive *bouquet*. There is no mirth and merry-making possible, while that grim uninvited guest sits grinning under a crown of roses and myrtle. If the poet reaches out his hand for his tablets he will indite no amatory verses to Venus, but a hymn in praise of the Fatal Three.

Who can doubt but that there were moments in the life of Béranger, when the gay singer forebore to celebrate the charms of wine, and "*la grisette ?*" When Lise might have put on her smartest ribbons, and he would not have looked at her ? When she might have tripped off with a senator under his very nose, and he would never have seen it ?

And Solomon, poor King Solomon, sitting brimful of wisdom on his throne of ivory, would he not sometimes have found his wine a thousand times more delicious, out of a common potter's vessel of burnt clay, than out of one of those hateful, shining goblets of red gold, that everybody was always staring at, and talking about ?

We are bored to death, as we gaze out of our first-floor window, overlooking the Podu Magosoi. It is mid-day, and the stream of busy life is flowing steadily on. The *birje* are rattling noisily to and fro. The *sacagiu*, with his blind, broken-kneed pony, goes by with a bunch of evergreens tied on the water-barrel, denoting that he has brought it from the hill-fountain, and not from the muddy Dimbovitza. The guard has marched by to the palae, to the lively music of the "Casquette of Father Bugeaud." The primitive country-carts, drawn by mild-eyed oxen, and stacked with slender beechen shafts for firewood, come filing in one after another, just such a patriarchal cortege as might have rumbled along



the by-ways of Egypt, when Abraham and his wife, and all that was his, went journeying towards the south. A covered *carutza* with four shaggy horses all abreast, a rope-harness, and a huge clapper-bell on the neck of the only one that has his proper complement of eyes (how is it one sees so many sightless animals in Bucharest?) goes bumping over the stones, while the "country cousins" who have come into town for a jaunt, recline inside like real live lords, and let their legs and feet dangle gracefully out either side between the rolling wheels. Sprightly officers, all over red and yellow, strut up and down before the *cafés*, like gaudy chattering macaws, clanking their virgin swords upon the pavement behind them, and ogling the lazy beauties who loll back upon the cushions of the passing carriages. How frightfully these people must suffer from the *ennui* that is born of lassitude and satiety! Beyond dinner, dress, scandal, love-making, and the play-house, they have nothing in the world to divert their weary minds. There is no *intellectual* life whatever

here. No *conversazione*, no scientific meetings, no lectures, no libraries, no public galleries. And even if there were, there is not a soul who would go a stone's throw for any one of them.

The Princess Elizabeth (who has the reputation of being a clever, well-informed woman) tried to stir society a little from its habitual apathy, and organised a series of *matinées musicales* at the palace. But it was a dead failure. These beautiful indolent ladies, who could spend hour after hour at their looking-glasses, and dance through half the night without fatigue, found it too much for their strength to stand up and sing a *cavatina*, or rattle through a valse by Strauss. The first time they came because the thing was a novelty; the second, because they had come the first; but the third time they began to grumble.

"How tiresome the Princess is with her stupid music!" they said to one another. So the fourth *matinée* found a heap of perfumed billets in the anteroom, and the salon quite deserted.

The Roumanians have no pictures, and never

had any statues. The only thing approaching to a work of art in all the city is an equestrian figure of Mihai Viteazu, a Hospodar, who lived in the Middle Ages, and was perpetually having a brush with the infidel Turk, and coming off with flying colours.

To the unemotional foreigner this cantankerous Prince is nothing but weariness and vexation of spirit. One is always dropping upon him axe in hand, on sign-boards, and window-shutters, and playing-cards. Indeed, he shares the honours with Trajan, who, in toga and sandals, is quite a popular character.

We turn away listlessly from the window. We are inexpressibly weary of everything in this city of Boyards. *Qué hay que hacer?* There is no place to drive, except the dreary Chaussée; no place to walk, except the sloppy Çismegiu, where the deadly miasma hangs in a white mist over the surface of the artificial lake, and the odds for getting a good square attack of fever are largely in your favour.

We sigh, and yawn, and stretch ourselves, and

dismally manipulate the little fragrant roll of Latakia. Then we watch the pale, grey, spiral smoke, curling off in light fantastic wreaths, and dream of the time when we shall shake from our feet the detested dust of this land of Tzigans.


In our mind's eye we are already peering into the blue waters of the Bosphorus, and counting the thin needle-like spikes of the minarets, and the solid round domes of the mosques, and giving ear to the melodious voice of the muezzin, who calls out that there is no God but Allah, and that it is just twelve of the day.

Somebody lays down his pipe, and pushes the window open.

"Hullo ! here's another funeral !"

We all scramble up. Sight-seeing is rare in Bucharest, and idle people are always inquisitive. So we lean out of the casement, and look at the procession as it comes leisurely up the street.

See it move slowly along—a showy, glittering sight, without a spark of solemnity. Four horses are prancing in sable and gold, drawing a freshly-



gilded car, surmounted by a plaster angel, with big, shining, tinfoil wings. There are mutes with flaming pitch torches, and a red-faced coachman in a cocked hat ; four young girls dressed in white walk along beside the hearse, carrying long blue ribbon streamers attached to the coffin, which reposes under the canopy, the lid a little raised. We catch a glimpse of a fold of rich white satin, a shred of costly lace, and a spray of orange-blossoms trailing among raven tresses, all belonging to the quiet occupant of that long black box, who is going down into the silence and darkness of the grave, dressed as if for a bridal.

The Roumanian carries his childish imagination and love of finery into the sacred precincts of the tomb. What a derisive fantasy it is to prank out the poor soulless body that has for ever done with the vanities of the world, in all the gewgaws and fripperies of the festal hour ! Yet they hang silks and satins upon the stiffened limbs, they clasp flashing jewels on the bare motionless bosom, and bangles on the cold white arms ; and twine odourless flowers among the dark tresses

4

that will never again float in the seductive valse. This pale woman, arrayed as if for conquest, looks like a bride; but it is a wedding with Death for bridegroom, and long lithe earthworms for guests, and the soddened clay for a nuptial pillow!

"Let us go to Filarète this afternoon," says the Major. "I have not seen the cemetery for fifteen years; and they say it is a very pretty sight now—quite a theatrical Père-la-Chaise."

"Do many people die here?" asks Madame Artless, her pink cheeks growing a shade paler as she nibbles at a *marron glacé*.

"Die? I should rather think so! You just wait until the summer. Malaria and epidemics carry 'em off like flies! especially the young 'uns," he adds ruthlessly.

We look at each other with consternation. A ~~pitiable~~ prospect truly! We have no desire to ~~bury~~ our bones at Filarète—pretty place though ~~it may be~~. Besides, we do not like any jesting ~~about these~~ horrid fevers, that seize hold of one ~~in such a sneaking~~, cowardly sort of way, not giving ~~one a chance~~. So we keep a sulky silence.

“Oh this dreadful, *dreadful* Bucharest!” cries Madame, lamenting; “I *know* I shall never leave it alive!” And her tears fall into her *bonbonnière*.

Then we have all to cheer her up, which is a work of time and of patience.


Behold us dashing through the town on our road to Filarète! We clatter over the stones of the rudely-paven streets, with noise enough for all the king's horses and all the king's men.

Could even the imagination of an Inquisitor devise a more diabolical mode of torture for man and beast, than these sharp three-cornered flints stuck higgledy-piggledy into the road, with the points inevitably uppermost?

We reach the suburbs of the town and ascend the long, winding hill. We pass the hospital-like Metropole, where a few long black-robed *Popas* are loafing about, passing their beads through listless fingers, or smoking the eternal cigarette, as they stare at us with placid, bearded countenances. How freshly the life-renewing breeze salutes our cheeks as we continue our upward

climb! Look at that classic fountain on the right, erected by the liberality of a Roumanian Boyard, over a natural spring of the coldest, clearest, sweetest water that ever welled up in a thirsty land. What would Bucharest do without that crystal stream from which nearly every carafe in the city is daily filled?

Now, as we gain the brow of the hill, let us turn and look at the town lying down in the hollow behind us. Is it possible that this is the place we quitted half an hour ago? That jumble of narrow streets, and deserted squares, and dismantled houses, and impossible architecture? Why, it seems from here like one of those fairy cities of the East that beguiled the imagination of our youth! It lies white and glittering under a blue Italian sky. From the high-domed church-towers, sheathed in white metal and shining like pearl, float out long airy pennants of spectral vapour like the transparent scarves of *tulle illusion* with which bare beauty veils her charms. Here and there a vivid oasis of green arrests the eye that wanders delighted over this fair and



fanciful paradise ; it is the mulberry-tree and the lilac that are still in leaf. Everywhere the light Greek Cross is pointing upward, in some places dominating the sinister Crescent, a symbol that the Bible has supplanted the Koran. We cannot look away from this dainty vision that seems to have been suddenly conjured up by the wand of a necromancer. It seems a place to live and die in, the El Dorado of our dreams, this white and smiling city sparkling in the sunlight, this wilderness that from afar off is blossoming like the rose !


Here we are at last under the decaying walls of Filarète. Our driver puts us down and moves off a little way on to the grass, where we see him clamber over the box and begin curling himself up on our vacated cushions as he prepares for a comfortable siesta.

What strange feelings take possession of us as we emerge from under the archway into the hallowed precincts of this dominion of the Dead ! We look around us without uttering a word. But one and all we are conscious that the gold and

glitter that everywhere arrests the gaze, jar painfully upon the solemn thoughts that awaken in the silence brooding over the Acre of God. How incongruous, and out of harmony, and monstrous to the æsthetic eye, are many of these monuments of an inconsolable affliction! Here the barbaric fancy of the East gives the rein to its puerile love of glowing colour and tawdry ornament, and rears a meretricious structure, all fresco, and gilding, and mosaic, and marble, side by side with some plain granite sarcophagus that betrays a reflection of the sober taste of the West.

Glance within the railings at those trumpery calico lilies with coarse green metallic leaves, stuck into the ground to represent living plants; and then upon this wreath of dying violets that lies, its last perfume long ago exhaled, upon the white polished slab of the child's narrow grave. Who can doubt which of these two offerings is most grateful to the dead?

We take our way silently among the tombs, gazing with a softened curiosity upon the portraits which hang above the names and



records of those who rest beneath. Here they are, of all physiognomies and of all ages, they who now lie quiet in such deep slumber, unmindful of all things terrestrial and diurnal.

What fair faces are some of these that look down upon us from the mouldering frames ! What varied specimens of the limner's and the photographer's art !


Stay a moment before this miniature. Look at the open candid brow of this young lad, the down scarcely yet perceptible upon his lip. Would not Lavater, the wise Swiss priest, tell us the far-away dreamy gaze in those dark almond-shaped eyes, was prophetic of an early doom ? How many hearts must have bled as the earth closed over that budding life so full of promise ! What a gap he must have left in the home-circle never to be filled again !

The bride, scarcely out of her teens, smiles softly beneath her veil, in all the bewildering influence of her girlish beauty. The baby, with its dimpled hands and innocent expression of wonder, peers out of the oval medallion. There

are the furrowed features of the patriarch in the fulness of years, and the lineaments of the strong man cut down in the day of his prime.

Crosses are everywhere, and legendary chaplets hang thickly upon these emblems of the Christian's faith and hope. "*A ma chérie*," "*A ma fille adorée*," "*A mon Père*," are some of the devices one reads traced in unfading immortelles. How quaintly touching are these endearing titles of human tenderness woven in flowers! Upon a few tomb-stones magnificent crowns of hot-house blossoms have been laid by loving hands. Some are fresh—some have their waxen petals already shrivelling in decay, a further illustration of the change that is for ever at work in Nature.

Here a child's rocking-horse stands rotting on the grave of its little owner, the ring of whose happy laughter is hushed for all time to be. There is the tiny carriage of the first-born, that no dear one who comes afterwards shall ever occupy, falling to pieces, soddened with the snow and rain of two dreary seasons. Lamps are burning night and day upon the graves. Their



red, and blue, and green lights twinkle faintly in the sunshine. Two women, bent on some pious errand, are gliding noiselessly among the sepulchres. What an oppressive silence reigns over this fruitful harvest-field that is awaiting the coming of the Reaper !

We draw near a round open place covered by a roof on wooden supports, looking like a house without walls. We go to the edge of the pit and peer down cautiously into the darkness. Smooth, white skulls, bleached by long exposure to the weather, grin up at us with glistening teeth, and cavernous sockets whence the eyes have dropped away years and years ago. Fragments of human skeletons, gradually crumbling into powdered dust, lie piled up in motley confusion. Strange creeping bodies that make one shudder involuntarily, twist hither and thither, and slide out of sight among these heaps of nameless bones—bones that have been unearthed in the digging of fresh graves, and that the sexton has flung down pell-mell into this the common charnel-house.

We turn and retrace our steps towards the entrance-gate, choosing a broad pathway on the right that is ended by a little chapel. We ascend the steps mechanically, not knowing the spectacle that awaits us, and find ourselves in a chamber hung with *arras* of sable and silver ; the daylight is shut out by the heavy draperies shrouding the windows, and tall wax candles without number are shedding their soft radiance around a black *catafalque* that is reared in the centre of the floor. Hush ! uncover your heads, and tread with muffled footsteps upon the echoing pavement — for we are in the presence of Death.

Under that gloomy dais are the remains of a woman who died yesterday. Our eyes are riveted with an inexplicable fascination upon this poor, old, ghastly, shrunken body, that fills us full of the shame of our mortality. If death be terrible even in the young and beautiful, what a malignant, fantastic horror does it not sometimes become, when we look upon the aged, disfigured by the storms, and exhausted by the emotions of

three-quarters of a century, as they lie upon the bed of dearly-earned repose !

Lace finer than a cobweb wraps the grey discoloured head ; the enamelled picture of a Saint is clasped against the lean, bare bosom ; and the wrinkled fingers are glittering with emeralds and rubies of great price. The service has not been long over, for the footstools are still scattered about, and the black carpet around the bier is soiled with the tramp of dusty feet. But now the relatives and friends are all departed, and the dead woman remains alone, with the perfume of the strong incense filling the little chapel like a cloud, making the light of the tall tapers burn with a pale unsteady flame, and the drawn features actually assume an aspect of life, as the wavering radiance flickers across them.

Let us go out into the air again. The atmosphere of this close *chapelle ardente* oppresses heart and head alike.

We sit down among the tombstones, moralising after the fashion of Hamlet the Dane, when he disturbs the ancient, garrulous gravedigger at his

ghastly occupation of flinging up the poor old bones with his ruthless spade, as he prepares a place for the fair white body of the drowned Ophelia—moralising, until the sun sinks down in the western sky, and the momentary spell of twilight is already melting away, as Night comes on apace, with her soft, dark, trailing garments.

And as we pass out of the gateway the coloured lamps are twinkling faintly about the graves, dotting the obscurity here and there with tiny sparks of living light—an emblem of the soul whose rays are still shining through the darkness of the tomb, on to the dawn of Eternity !





FINANCES.




must now read in print that they already are, or one day surely will be, the richest and most flourishing people of the universe !

As a *fact*, the consolidated debt of Roumania amounts, up to this date, to the very respectable figure of £25,000,000.

Prior to the union of the two Principalities under Prince Couza, and therefore hardly twenty years ago, neither Moldavia nor Wallachia had a single penny of debt ; on the contrary, there was always a little balance left in the Treasury after everything had been paid at the end of the year. *Mais nous avons changé tout cela.* It is true that since then railways and chaussées have been constructed, bridges and barracks built, and an army raised. But all these, like everything else in the country, are only for show. The chaussées are roughly planned ; the railways unevenly laid, and badly worked ; the bridges are frequently carried bodily away by the flooding of the rivers ; and as for the army, we quote the opinion of two very celebrated Prussian officers who reviewed the troops only a little time ago, and who gave it as


their verdict, that although there was very good fighting material in the soldiers, the officers were so incompetent that it would not require one regiment of Uhlans to rout the whole lot in less than no time.

The day cannot be far off when Roumania, willing, or not willing, must be compelled, if not to repudiate, at least to compound for her debt, as many other States have done before her. It is only by the introduction of the most thorough and radical reforms in the administration ; abstention from party squabbles ; a reduction of their army, and the lavish expenses attendant thereupon ; and the blessing of a few abundant harvests, after the poor crops of the past few seasons, that Roumania can hope to keep her position as an interest-paying State in Europe. And all who know the country well will agree that, with the exception of the latter, these are miracles which cannot reasonably be looked for here. The proverbial fertility of Moldavia and Wallachia has been well-nigh exhausted by centuries of bad cultivation ; never has this fact become more



palpable, and been brought nearer home, than during the last fifteen or twenty years. Capital, and very large capital, is required to introduce an entirely different, and more modern system of agriculture, for the mere scraping of the soil will avail no longer. But even under the most favourable circumstances, and the very best dispensations of nature and climate, *really good* harvests cannot be expected for a long time to come.


In the course of this very year, we have seen hundreds and hundreds of acres where the crops were left standing and uncut, for the sole reason that the farmers did not consider them worth the expense of reaping and threshing! This is no exaggeration but a painful fact. As to the quality of the grain produced in Roumania during the latter ten years, we refer our readers to the corn-merchants of Mark-Lane. There they will learn that, with the exception of the maize which is still largely imported into England for distilling purposes, the produce of this country has been all but excluded from the leading Corn-Exchanges of Europe, on account of its deficient weight.



Only quite recently the *Times* in some judicious observations on Roumania, wrote "that if she puts her troops on a war-footing, she will have to cease paying tribute to the Porte, and also cease to pay any interest on her external and internal debts." This is quite true, and need not be discussed for a single instant. But will Roumania fare otherwise even if she take no active part in the contest now threatening Eastern Europe? We think not. The catastrophe may be adjourned for a year or so, but the end will, and must always be, the same.

In the event of a Russian aggression on Turkey, the neutrality of Roumania becomes impossible. From her geographical position she must (the treaties of 1856 and 1858 notwithstanding) either side with, or against, Russia, and what the policy of the Roumanian Government will be, this eventuality happening, can easily be guessed; "coming events cast their shadow before."

The most perfect neutrality, even were it possible, cannot save Roumania from the bankruptcy




which must overwhelm her at no very distant date.

A country of 5,000,000 inhabitants, having hardly any other resources than those of a nearly exhausted soil, with a consolidated debt of £25,000,000 requiring an annuity of more than £1,600,000 out of a *nominal* revenue of £3,800,000, pending engagements, and a floating debt through accumulated and chronic yearly deficits, amounting to at least another £5,000,000, cannot be expected to pay its way, and keep faith with its creditors.

A loan for 42,500,000 francs has lately been voted by the Roumanian Chamber, confirmed by the Senate, and approved of by Prince Charles at the beginning of the present year (1876); great efforts have been made not only in England, but in France, Germany, and Belgium, to procure this amount, but without success. Becoming aware of the state of things, the Chambers recently authorised the Minister of Finance to issue Treasury Bills to the extent of 16,000,000 francs, or £640,000, such bills having from six to

twelve months to run, in order to meet the most pressing requirements. The interest on these, fixed by Government, was first ten, and subsequently twelve per cent. per annum ; but neither native nor foreign capitalists were forthcoming in sufficient number to subscribe to the loan, even on such enticing conditions. Hardly £200,000 have been placed, and these, for the greater part, among the holders of drawn Rural Bonds (an internal loan contracted by Roumania during the reign of Prince Couza) and the possessors of overdue coupons and bonds of the State Domains loan which the Government (being unable by any other means to fulfil its engagements) permitted to be converted into Treasury Bills ; these bonds could be readily bought in the market at from eight to ten per cent. discount, and the Government accepted them at par, promising to pay gold for silver, (another difference of from one and a half to two per cent.) provided not more than fifty per cent. of the amount subscribed for was handed in in paper, and the remainder was paid for in cash. These Treasury




Bills represented therefore an investment of from twenty to thirty per cent. per annum, according as they were taken for twelve or only six months ; in spite of this, the loan tempted few people. —The chief cashier of the *Visterie* told us at the time that he had not received £20,000 from actual subscribers in cash on account of this loan, and that even those who held overdue bonds and coupons, were fain to part with their money to make up the fifty per cent. which had to be paid in cash.

Although the old floating debt has been consolidated not later than last year (1875), there is again a very large deficit, and we challenge the most biased of Roumania's well-wishers to contradict this statement. The Government has helped itself to the funds which have been deposited by private individuals and corporate bodies in the *Caisse de Dépôt et de Consignation* (we do not here refer to the late chief cashier who abstracted over 1,000,000 francs on his own account) ; and Bonds of the Rural and Domainal loans drawn for redemption, remain either unpaid or unpro-

vided for, Government again having *borrowed* the revenues specially set aside to meet these liabilities. The same is also the case with many municipal funds, such as those of the cities of Braila, Jassy, Craïova, etc., which are under the control of the Minister of Finance; the *Ephorie*, or administration of the Hospitals; *Caisse des Pensions*, and others unnecessary to name.

If the embarrassments of the Roumanian Treasury were a jesting matter, and would justify the relation of a story, we might tell our readers how, quite recently, we met in Bucharest one of the chief functionaries of the *Visterie*, or Ministry of Finance, with a face which was unusually hopeful and radiant. On our showing a little pardonable curiosity to know what accounted for this festive appearance, he told us with the utmost frankness that he felt happier than he had done for a long time past, because the head cashier had just told him that the safe was shut up with an available balance of *eighty-seven francs and thirty-five centimes* towards the next day's payments! This must appear



almost incredible to any one who does not know the straits to which the Roumanian Finance Minister is frequently reduced, but it is nevertheless true.

As a further illustration of the generally collapsed state of the public Treasury, we may add something which came under our personal observation. We had occasion to go to the Visterie, in order to cash a *mandat* for two thousand francs on behalf of an acquaintance, an American general to whom that amount was due, for some specimens of a new gun that he had supplied to the Government. The Minister's most amiable secretary, although pulling an alarmed face at the three noughts, assured us that it should be paid immediately, that was to say, as soon as the necessary formality of entering the document into about half a dozen books was gone through. We had, therefore, about twenty minutes to wait in the office of the chief cashier, and what we saw and heard there was very instructive indeed, anything but new to us, of course, but it must be rather startling to the English holders of Roumanian Government Bonds.

A poor priest came, for the seventh time, from a distance of ten miles in the country, to cash a *mandat* of some £8 or £10 ; a gasfitter, who had been doing work for one of the Ministries, told us he had called at least twenty times in the course of two months to get £28 odd ; the matron of a hospital wanted only £13 and a few shillings ; holders of old-dated *mandats* for pensions were to be seen by the score, and these we found were the least considered of all. A policeman was stationed at the entrance to prevent the intruders from creating any disturbance. Each and every one had come to tell a tale of want or necessity, and to use all his, or her, eloquence to obtain the little sum of money due since Heaven only knows how long ! But the cashier had the same formula of polite refusal for all the anxious applicants :

“I am very sorry, I have no money. Come again in two or three days, or a week or so, and I will see then. These gentlemen,” pointing in our direction, “will take away all I have left for to-day.”

And in fact we *did* take it away, and the tub had to be scraped to make up the required

amount, some £80 sterling, which we received all in silver, over eight hundred francs being paid in five-penny pieces !

Roumania has to put her house in order, as the first step towards equilibring her budget in future ; for this a fresh loan of from £5,000,000 to £6,000,000 is absolutely necessary ; and this will entail a further annual charge of £500,000 to £600,000, at the very least, on her revenue. This amount added to the £1,600,000 already required for the payment of the interest and the sinking fund of her present debt, will bring us to the respectable total of £2,200,000—a very insignificant amount when it has to be borne by a wealthy, industrious, and progressive nation. But the Roumanians are anything but a wealthy and industrious people, and as to their state of progression, it has of late years been chiefly confined to their ability for running into debt and of engaging in frivolous and unremunerative enterprises.

With a revenue *on paper* amounting to about £3,800,000, but which has hardly ever exceeded

£3,000,000 *in cash*, £2,200,000 for the service of her home and foreign debt is out of all proportion.

As it is with private individuals, so it is with all constituted States. A man who, with an income of £600 a year, spends £400 on the mere rent of his dwelling, will not, with all the expenses of housekeeping and of supporting his extravagant establishment, be long before he finds his name in the list of bankrupts, and *en route* for Portugal Street.

“But the revenues of the country can be improved, fresh taxes raised, the remainder of the state properties be alienated,” will be the retort of the sanguine Roumanian.

It is quite true that all this *might* be accomplished, but nobody will see it in our time, or at least not for many, many years to come; and certainly not sufficiently soon, nor thoroughly enough, to bring Roumania out of her present difficulties, and to enable her to pay the interest on all the bonds she has issued.

Unless the Government wishes to ruin the



country entirely, radical reforms in the administration are urgently required. There must be less party strife, more real, honest work, and the assistance of foreign capital to bring the cultivation of the soil on a proper footing, and promote native industry. For all this, better laws, or at least a less corrupted application of existing laws, is needed, and the leaders of the people must try to win the confidence of the foreigner, who is able and willing to assist them, instead of hating and decrying him as they now do. Capital must be rendered safe, instead of being exposed to risks innumerable and lawsuits without end; in fact many more things will have to be done, but they cannot be entered upon here.

Fresh taxes cannot be raised for the present; the Roumanian peasantry are already groaning under the weight of those now enforced. Cattle and stores have been sold over and over again by the officials, and numerous homes have been dismantled to pay the tax-collectors. Troops have been sent into the country on more than one occasion, to put down or prevent in time the

disturbances to be apprehended from this summary way of collecting imposts, which the poor and broken-down working classes had not the means to discharge.

If Roumania cannot make both ends meet under present circumstances, how will she do in a year or two, when the interest on another £5,000,000 or £6,000,000 will have to be paid? She has, for the last two years, had a deficit of from £600,000 to £800,000 per annum on a budget of £3,800,000; her imposts and taxes on the people *cannot* be yet awhile increased. If those now created could only be paid regularly, or even paid at all, there would be no deficits, as the budgets are always very evenly balanced *on paper*, and——well, let the fortunate Roumanian bondholders judge for themselves of the consequences.






DOÏNE.



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DOÏNE.

THE Roumanian *Doïne* are little fragmentary pieces of verse, that resemble the songs of the Troubadours, or the Minnesingers, when they are amatory or tender, and the German *Lieder*, when they treat of subjects which are generally written under the form of ode, hymn, or ballad.


The *Doïna* is presumably inspired by the *Doru*, an indefinable sentiment, made up of regret, hope, sadness, and love, and which is supposed to cause the ultimate death of whomsoever comes within the range of its fascinating, but baneful influence.

The *Doïna* is sung in slow time and a mournful cadence, and is accompanied by an irregular

musical movement. The impression of vague melancholy by which these airs are generally pervaded, attaches itself so persistently to the memory of the listener, that he cannot easily cease to remember it. Sometimes the traveller crossing the Carpathians at dusk of evening, hears in the distance the notes of *Doïna*, rendered by a soft plaintive female voice. Overcome by an inexpressible charm, he arrests his step mechanically, and bends his ear with rapt attention to catch the sweet sighing sounds that reverberate softly among the mountains.

These national songs are not only poetical compositions, very frequently of the highest order, but are also the sincere and vivid outpouring of the genius of the Roumanian people.

In perusing the following strophes (translated from the collection of Vasile Alexandri), the reader will occasionally find himself in the very mythology of the ancient world. The Sun appears before him as in the days of Ovid, in the guise of a beautiful youth with golden locks, who is borne upon a chariot, to which are attached nine



fiery and impatient steeds ; the god Pan still pursues the maid in the forest, and the lovely shy Egeria still inhabits the clear and limpid fountain, lost in the shadow of the rock.

THE DOÏNA.

If I had a beautiful young girl, with flowers in her tresses, and roses upon her lips—

If I had a mistress, with a proud and lofty soul, and eyes black as the fruit of the hawthorn—

If I had a fair young girl, with a budding figure, and a step like the foot of a fawn—

I would become a nightingale, chanting the *Doïna* of love athwart the breezes of evening !

If I had a little carabine, three balls in my leathern pouch, and an axe, true as a sister—

If I had at my desire a horse bold as the lion and black as sin—

If I had seven brothers as brave as I, and
mounted upon winged dragons—

I would become an eagle, and would intone in
open daylight, in the face of the sun, the
Doïna of vengeance !

And I would say to the one : “ Sweetheart ! I
swear by this little Cross, to take care of thee
like a sister ! ”

And I would say to the other : “ Fleet charger !
go, outstrip in thy course the flight of the swal-
lows, by mountain and valley ! ”

And I would say to the rest : “ Seven brothers
mine ! make the sign of the Cross, and swear
never to yield yourselves up while a breath of
life remains in your bodies ! And now let us
set off without fear—let us go and wrest our
country from the Infidel and from slavery ! ”



THE LITTLE BIRD.*

"LITTLE white bird, why dost thou remain so lonely near thy nest? Is not the sky clear, and the water of the spring bright and limpid?

"Why weep so bitterly? See how gay thy brethren are, how they flutter and sing merrily in the shade of the wood!

"Tell me what grief, what regret, disturbs thy little heart, that thou stayest all alone, and singest no longer, dear little bird!"

"The water is bright and limpid, O my brother! and the leaf shudders softly in the flowery thicket. But, alas! my nest is falling to pieces, for since a long while a hideous serpent is seeking to destroy it.

"Brother! a gigantic vulture appears on the horizon; he fixes his eyes, he extends his talons, towards my little nest!"

* An allegory, in which Roumania is represented under the form of a small bird, that is afraid to leave its nest because it sees the shadow of a vulture (Russia) looming on the horizon.

ÇINEL—ÇINEL.

THE shepherd said to the young maiden seated beside him :

“ Çinel—Çinel !

“ Two soft-rayed stars have abandoned the sky full of heavenly lights, and have descended to attach themselves to thy forehead. Guess, my darling, or if not I kiss them !”

She did not guess directly, the innocent child, and she was softly kissed upon the eyes.

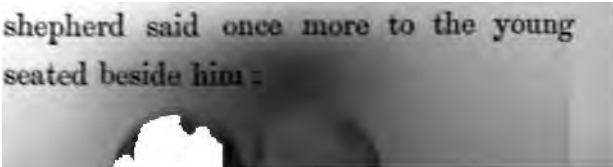
The shepherd said again to the tender maiden seated beside him :

“ Çinel—Çinel !

“ When it is closed, one sees a beautiful scarlet flower, and as soon as it opens one sees white bells of the lily of the valley. This marvel owes its birth to thy face. Guess, my darling, or if not I kiss it .”

She did not guess directly, the merry child, and she was softly kissed upon the mouth.

The shepherd said once more to the young maiden seated beside him :



“Çinel—Çinel!

“Round and white, two little wings are fluttering continually, as if to fly away towards the sky, but thou, thou holdest them captive in the place where they first began to grow. Guess, my darling, or if not I kiss them!”

She did not guess directly, the rosy child, and she was softly kissed upon the bosom.

HERCULES.*

(ERCULEAN.)

THREE young girls, three sisters, went to gather flowers at sunrise. The eldest followed the course of the Tchernă;† the second entered into the

* This ballad is one of the oldest and most interesting of those still preserved by popular tradition, on account of the mythological allegory that inspired it. Here the mind is carried back to the time of the Roman domination in Dacia, when the Baths of Hercules, nowadays known as the Baths of Mehadia, in the Banat of Temesvár, were famous among the colonists of Trajan. The young girl “sweet and alluring,” hidden in the shadow of the rock, represents the mineral spring that, after twenty centuries, still keeps its name of the Fountain of Hercules.

† The Tchernă is a little river flowing through a romantic

garden that bordered the river; while the youngest, the shyest of the three, went winding her way up the path of the stream.*


Many youths, led by love, pursued their footsteps, gaily singing as they went, only to come back again, shedding tears and full of sorrow. But behold! a young and comely warrior of the name of Hercules appears on the banks of the water, stops, and thus addresses the Tcherná :

“Limpid Tcherná! stay thy course for awhile, and tell me of the three sisters who went to gather flowers at sunrise.”

“The eldest wandered towards an enchanted shore, along the Danube towards the sea; the second went out of the garden and lost her way

pass in the Carpathians, and falling into the Danube near Orsova. The bath-establishment of Mehadia is constructed on the banks of this miniature torrent. The road that leads to it from Orsova lies through a most picturesque and hilly country, rich in memories of the Roman rule.

* It is probable that by these three sisters the poet intended to represent the three largest portions of Old Dacia—Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, which formerly extended as far as the river Dniester, and embraced a region of the *littoral* of the Black Sea.



among the hoary forests, beyond the nine high mountains ; and the youngest, the shyest of the three, sighs and weeps down there, under a rock, hidden in a deep shadow."

Hercules, the brave warrior, urges forward his horse—a leap—the banks resound—and he is beside the weeping rock !

"Maiden ! come out of the rock ! Appear thou to my sight !"

"Alas ! how can I come out of the rock when I am all uncovered ? I am afraid of the sun ; I fear to be dried up by his rays."

"Be without alarm, thou shy young maiden ! I will take thee in my arms, to revive thy vigour, and I will shelter thee from the caresses of the wind, and the ardent kisses of the sun !"

"O my brave lover ! if I am dear to thee, and if thou art come to make me thy consort, tear me from the dense shadow of this rock, that I may step into the light of the sun, my heart overflowing with love !"


Hercules, the brave warrior, strikes the rock with his foot, and suddenly he sees disclosed a

young nude girl. She is white and fair, she is sweet and alluring—and her golden hair waves loosely over her shoulders.

Hercules takes the maid in his arms, presses her upon his heart, and at that moment she re-awakes to life. Then he lulls her gently to sleep, upon a couch of perfumed flowers—a nest that he makes for her in the shade, out of reach of the sun.

THE HORA.

(THE Hora, the national dance of the Roumanians, recalls exactly the grouping of the ancient Chorus, such as we see it sculptured on the antique bas-reliefs. The men and women join hands, and form a ring, in the centre of which are placed the players, generally Laoutari. The dancers move round, swaying their arms backwards and forwards, and pointing with one foot, while they make a step either in front or behind, with the other. They draw first close together, and then wide apart again, still holding hands, in such a



way that the circle is alternately contracted and expanded. During these movements, the slowness and monotony of which give the Hora a character of indolence and *abandon*, that is quite in harmony with the melancholy genius of the people, one of the musicians sings a song, which he accompanies upon his own instrument. These songs are alike distinguished by the name of Horas.)

“Now the Hora commences at the foot of the great oak tree, now the Hora begins to wheel slowly round and round. Come, my beloved, come near to me, that I may press thy hand, Marie Marioutza, as I did last night at the fountain !

“Come, make thy *kobsa** gaily resound, thou dark spirit of Terror, phantom of Hell,† if thou dost not wish me to change thy shoulders into a

* Eight-stringed mandolin.

† Nick-names given by the common people to the Tzigana. As a general rule the wandering Laoutari are all Gipsies.

kobsa, and thy hair to bristle up under my fingers! Come, thou, the Red-hot Iron, and thou, the Long-Jube,* press firmly with the bow, for I have ready waiting for thee a thick stick yonder, behind the hedge, and many pieces of silver in the pouch hung at my waist.

“Forward, steady, and on so, until evening; for my beloved Marie Marioutza is fair as a bright day in Spring. Steady, my friends! dance with a will, and keep on without stopping! Do not make me blush for you, because the pretty little mouth that is smiling at me in love is driving me mad!

“I have trimmed my hat with beads and flowers, so that my beloved may look on me with pride. My shirt is embroidered in gold and silk; my gun is there on my shoulder, my sweetheart is beside me; to the deuce with all care and trouble!

“I do not fear anything more in the world,

* Alluding to the trade of blacksmith followed by many of the Tzigans. *Jube*, a long robe worn by the musicians.

neither the *Vornik**, nor the Devil, nor even Satan, the father of all infernal spirits.”

* * * * *

“ Friends, do as I do ! Let us dance steadily. Let us strike the ground with our feet in time to the music ! Let us make it re-echo, even down to its deepest caverns, to astonish the world, and if need be, God Almighty Himself !

“ I am tired of heavy taxes, of the plough, and of the spade, of the *çokoi*, and of labours that are never done ! To-day is a great holiday ; the swings turn round and round full of young girls. Ah ! may my sandals drop in pieces off my feet, and I die, dancing with thee, Marie Marioutza !”

* Peasant, elected by a village to collect the taxes.

THE CUCKOO AND THE TURTLE-DOVE.*

(CUCUL ȘI TURTURICA).


"DEAR Turtle-dove, charming little bird, be my mistress until Sunday!"

"As far as you are concerned I should not say no, but I say no on account of your mother, who is wicked and a witch; she would always be reproaching me for loving you too much and caressing you too often!"

"Dear Turtle-dove, don't be unkind, let me love you until Sunday!"

"O dear no, charming cuckoo! No, I cannot think of listening to you! Let me remain in peace, or else I shall transform myself into a little white roll, moistened with tears, and hide under the ashes of the hearth!"

* These two birds often appear in the national songs. The cuckoo has a certain mysterious *prestige* in the eyes of the Roumanian people, and his song is considered as a good or bad omen, according as it sounds on the left or the right of the person who hears it.



“Whatever you do, whatever may become of you, I shall not leave you alone, for I, in my turn, shall transform myself into a little shovel, and even though I be burnt up in the fire, I shall go and seek you under the ashes, to protect you from the flames. Then I shall cool you with my breath, and cover you with kisses, in such a way that you will no longer be able to help yourself from being my mistress, dear Turtle-dove !”

“As far as you are concerned, I should not say no, but I say no on account of your mother, who is wicked, and a witch ; she would always be reproaching me for loving you too much, and would cast an evil spell over me, so that I could not caress you any more ; and rather than be continually scolded, rather than be bewitched, I would prefer to change myself into a flexible reed, and hide in the depths of the pond, in order to escape your pursuit !”


“Whatever you do, whatever may become of you, you shall not get rid of me, for I, in my turn, shall change myself into a shepherd, a singer of *Doïne*, and I shall go to the pond to look for a

slender reed to make a flute with. I shall then see you, and shall cut your stem, and my lips will cover you with kisses, in such a way that you will no longer be able to help yourself from being my mistress until Sunday, dear Turtle-dove."

"No, I shall not listen to you, dear and gracious Cuckoo with the grey feathers. I know how nice it would be to be with you. But alas! your mother is so wicked, and a witch! And rather than suffer her company, I would transform myself into a little holy image, and hide in the back of the Church, where I might always think of you."

"Whatever you do, whatever may become of you, I shall not leave you alone, for I, in my turn, shall disguise myself as a chorister, or a *popa*, and I shall be so religious, oh so religious! that I shall go to church every day, from Monday until Sunday, to bow before the holy images, and kiss you*

* One of the most common forms of devotion among the Roumanians consists in going round the church and kissing successively all the saintly figures that adorn the walls, making at the same time the sign of the Cross.



in such a way that you will no longer be able to help yourself from being my mistress, dear Turtle-dove !”

GROZA, THE BRIGAND.

PALE as the wax taper burning at his head, Groza, the brigand, lay stretched out upon an old wooden plank on the threshold of the prison. He slept in the last sleep of death, and nobody in the world shed a tear over his decease.

The crowd assembled about him looked at his corpse with a feeling of sadness. Sometimes shudders of terror seemed to run through the throng, but no one made the sign of the Cross, although some, struck with wonderment, murmured, their cheeks resting upon their hands :

“Is this really that Groza, so celebrated throughout the country ? That brigand so thirsty of blood ? Is it really he, that Groza, that wild beast, who without fear for the blackest sin, has cut off so many fair lives ? He who has trampled under foot even religion itself ?”

Now out of the thick of the crowd there comes an old man with a long beard, who advances towards Groza. He draws out of his pocket two pieces of money, and after having kissed the cold hand of the brigand, slips them into it, making the sign of the Cross. Then having once more crossed himself, he lets fall a few tears upon his cheeks, as he thus addresses those assembled :

“ Good people ! last winter my poor and humble house became a prey to the flames. My wife and children, cast out homeless, trembled with cold in the open fields ; I had neither anything to feed them with, nor any shelter to put them under. Alas ! I was in despair, and I felt that I was going to die ! I had ceased to hope anything more from the mercy of Heaven, and was calling Death to my aid, when suddenly this man who lies here (may God be pleased to accept his soul !) this Christian, came over the brow of the hill on a horse white as winter, and stopping before me,

“ ‘ Weep not, Roumanian ! ’ said he, ‘ be without anxiety and cheer up thy heart. See, here is something to get bread and clothing for thy



family ! And here is also money to buy thee another house !

“ Ever since that day, good people, my children have never ceased to call down blessings on his name, for since that day they have been out of the reach of misery !”

Having said these words, the old man imprinted another kiss upon the forehead of the brigand, and, leaning upon his knotty stick, turned sighing away, while the people, penetrated by a feeling of remorse, cried out as with one voice :

“ May God forgive the sins of the brigand Groza !”

LOVE-DOÏNA.

“ THE forest is sighing, the forest is wailing, for a tender little doe. Alas ! my poor heart sighs and wails like the forest, but it is for a fair young girl.

“ The leaf expands, the leaf falls, and there is no little doe to nibble it with her teeth. Alas ! what will become of me ? The *Doru* has taken possession of my heart, and makes it lament with-

out ceasing. O my heart! resign thyself, like the green earth under the foot of man, until the young girl and the little doe return to the forest!"

THE PRETTY MOUNTAIN-GIRL.

"MOUNTAIN-GIRL, young and pretty, why dost thou not cross the brook, so that I might press thee tenderly upon my heart? So help me Heaven, I have a mind to make thee leave thy father's house for ever, and forget everything, even the Lord God Himself!

"Art thou not tired of always spinning before the door? Throw thy distaff in the high grasses, and leap lightly over the brook, and we will go gathering, thou strawberries in the wood and I flowers on thy fair bosom.

"Here, close at hand, in the wood, thick with green leaves, is a rich and flowery sward caressed by a little wanton stream; come, sit with me upon the grass, O young and pretty mountain-girl! Come, and I will sing thee a *doîna doînitza*


that will make thee shed sweet tears of tenderness."

LOVE-SONG.

"SEEST thou the proud eagle, O my beloved, how he darts away, rises, and flies into the bosom of the clouds? Thus my soul, rejoicing in thy adored presence, flutters up to heaven, agitated by tremulous emotions.

"Hearest thou a mysterious voice singing in the silence of the night, and floating on the air with the perfume of the flowers? Thus melodious voices awaken in the stillness of my heart when that heart embraces thee from afar, O my gentle angel!

"Seest thou amid the planets of heaven the long bright rays which the star of Venus sheds amorously about her? Thus when thy beauty comes before my sight, my eyes grow hot and burn with a passionate delirium. For Heaven has given the eagle wings to bear him away into space; to the stars, a soft radiance; to the night,



low sighing voices ; but on thee it bestowed enchanting graces, and on me a soul to adore thee !”

SONG OF HAPPINESS.

“My thoughts fly towards thee, my beloved, like the bird who seeks his leafy nest. They penetrate into thy white bosom, like the butterfly who hides himself in a cradle of flowers.

“Day and night the warm desires of my soul are caressing thee, O my Ninitza ! and gathering honeyed kisses upon thy lips.

“My eyes swim in a confused mist when I turn them towards thee, and they read in thy smile thy celestial tenderness and my divine destiny.

“All in the world that attracts or charms, all that elevates the soul and makes a god of man ; love, glory, happiness, thou hast given me all, O my gentle angel !

“Henceforth Death may come, and cruel fates overrun the world. I wait for them without fear, and I defy their fatal power, for I love and I am beloved !

“My heart is a luminous garden, where warbles a bright bird of Paradise. My life, crowned with happiness, glides on into the bosom of eternity, like a beautiful day of Spring.

“For love is a sun, and my soul a flower, and my life an exquisite dream, because Ninitza, the adored one ! has opened Paradise to me in a smile and a kiss !”

MIORITA.

UPON the declivity of the mountain, beautiful as the entrance into Paradise, there descended, winding down towards the valley, three flocks of sheep led by three young herdsmen. One is from the plains of Moldavia, another is a Hungarian, and the third is a mountaineer of Vrantcha.

The Hungarian and the Vrantchian take counsel together, and resolve to kill their companion at sunset, because he is the richest, and possesses the greatest number of sheep with beautiful horns, the most docile horses, and the most courageous dogs.

Since three days a certain little lamb, with white silky wool, has not browsed the grass of the meadow, nor has she ceased to bleat pitifully with her voice.

“Pretty lamb, pretty and plump, why, since three days, dost thou so complain? Does the grass of the meadow no longer please thee? Or art thou perhaps ill, dear little lamb?”

“O my beloved shepherd, lead thy flock into the middle of this cluster of trees; there is grass for us, and shade for thee. Master, dear master, call close to thee without delay the bravest of thy dogs, for the Hungarian and the mountaineer have resolved to kill thee at sunset!”

“Little lamb of Birsa, if thou art a prophetess, and it is written that I must die among the pasture-grounds, thou wilt tell the Hungarian, as well as the mountaineer, to bury me in the enclosure of the fold, that I may be always near you, my beloved flock, or behind the pen, where I may always hear the voices of my dogs.

“Thou wilt tell my slayers that. Then thou wilt place at the head of my grave a little beechen


flute full of the melodies of love, a little bone flute full of the accents of harmony, and a little flute of elderwood full of the tones of passion, so that when the wind blows through their pipes it will draw out such plaintive sounds that my sheep will gather together about my grave, and will bewail me with tears of blood.

“ But take care not to speak to them of murder. Tell them only that I have married a beautiful Queen, the Bride of the World.* Tell them also, that at the moment of our union a star fell down; that the sun and moon held the crown over my head; that I had for witnesses the pines and the plane trees; for priests, the high mountains; for orchestra, the birds; and for torches, the stars of heaven.

“ But if thou shouldst perceive, if thou shouldst ever meet with, a poor old woman with a woollen scarf, searching about the fields and weeping as she asks of every one :

“ ‘ Who of you has known, who has seen a

* That is, Death. The Roumanian language is full of these poetical metaphors.



young and handsome shepherd, whose slender figure would pass through a finger-ring? His face is white as milk, his hair is dusky as the raven's plume, and his eyes are dark and glistening as the wild blackberry.'

"Then, my little lamb, take thou pity on her grief, and tell her simply that I have wedded the daughter of a King, in a country beautiful as the entrance of Paradise.

"But take care not to tell my mother that at my marriage a star fell down, that I had for witnesses the pines and the plane trees of the forest; for priests the high mountains; a thousand birds for orchestra; and the stars of heaven for torches."*

THE SUN AND THE MOON.

BROTHER! one day the Sun resolved to marry. During nine years, drawn by nine fiery coursers, he had rolled by Heaven and Earth with the rapidity of the wind or the flying arrow.

* The end of this ballad has never been discovered.

But it was in vain that he fatigued his horses. Nowhere could he find a lover worthy of him. Nowhere in the universe was one who could equal in beauty his sister Helen, the beautiful Helen with the tresses of silver !*

The Sun went to meet her, and thus addressed her : “ My dear little sister Helen, Helen of the silver tresses, let us be betrothed, for we are made for one another !

“ We are alike, not only in our hair, and our features, but also in our incomparable beauty. I have locks of gold, and thou hast tresses of silver. My face is shining and splendid, and thine is soft and radiant.”

“ O my brother, light of the world ! thou who art pure of all stain ! one has never seen a brother and sister married together, because it would be a shameful sin !”

* The beautiful Helen, with the tresses of silver, is one of the most poetical images that the popular fancy has ever created in Roumania. She serves to designate everything that is most exquisite, tender, and noble in the world. Helen is the charming heroine of all the legends and stories.

At this rebuke the Sun hid himself, and mounted up higher to the throne of God, bent before Him, and spake:

"Lord our Father! the time has arrived for me to wed, but alas! I cannot find a lover in the world worthy of me, except the beautiful Helen, Helen of the silver tresses!"

God heard him, and taking him by the hand led him into Hell, to affright his heart, and then into Paradise to enchant his soul.

Then He spoke to him, and while He was speaking the sky began to shine brightly, and the clouds passed over.

"Radiant Sun! Thou who art free from all stain! Thou hast been through Hell, and hast entered Paradise. Choose between the two!"

The Sun replied recklessly: "I choose Hell for my life-time, on condition that I am not alone, but ~~that~~ I live with my sister Helen, Helen of the ~~silver tresses!~~"

* * * * *

The Sun descended from the high heaven, to



his sister Helen, and ordered the preparations for the wedding. He ornamented her brows with the waving gold chaplet of the bride,* and put on her a royal diadem and a diaphanous robe, all embroidered in fine pearls—and then they went into the church together.

But woe to him ! woe to her ! during the service the lamps were extinguished ; the bells cracked ; the seats turned upside down ; the steeple shook at its base ; the priests lost their voices ; and their sacred robes were torn off their backs !

The poor bride was convulsed with fear. For suddenly, woe to her ! an invisible hand grasped her up, and having borne her into space, precipitated her into the sea, where she was immediately changed into a beautiful silver fish !

On his side, the Sun grew pale, and mounted into the celestial dome. Then letting himself slide down in the West, he plunged into the sea

* At the marriage-ceremony, the young bride is crowned with long cascades of shining gold thread. This decoration, at once graceful and splendid, serves her instead of a veil.

to search for his sister Helen, Helen of the silver tresses.

However, the Lord God (sanctified in Heaven and upon the Earth) took the fish in His hand, shot it into space, and transformed it again into a moon.

Then He said—and while God was speaking the entire universe trembled, the peaks of the mountains bowed down, and men shivered with fear—

“Thou, Helen, of the long silver tresses, and thou resplendent Sun, who are both free from all stain, I condemn you for Eternity to follow each other with your eyes, through space, without ever being able to meet, or to reach each other upon the celestial highway! Pursue one another for all time, in travelling around the skies, and lighting up the world!”



THE SBURATORUL.

“My dear little sister, dost thou not know the old song that says, that at the hour when the daylight fades among the leaves, the Sburatorul rushes in pursuit of the young maidens, who come to pick strawberries in the wood, and who wear, like thee, flowers upon their bosoms ?

“This charming elf, with his invisible hand, snatches away their strawberries, and kisses the maidens, and bites them softly upon the mouth and brows. My sister, thy lip is bruised ; my sister, where is the fruit that thou hast gathered ? Say, hast thou not met with the Sburatorul in the depth of the dark wood ?”

“My little sister, the song goes on to say that the Sburatorul loves equally well, to beset in the dense shadows, the young, white, innocent girls who come to pluck violets in the grass, and who wear upon their necks, as thou dost, a beautiful chain of beads.

“The charming elf breaks their necklaces in his caressing play, and where every bead was, he

leaves a tender kiss. My sister, thy necklace is broken ; my sister, where are thy beads ? Say, hast thou not met with the Sburatorul in the heart of the woods ?”

So the two young and pretty maidens bantered each other as they ran gaily down the same path-way, while on the border of the forest two dark-haired youths were fastening, with an air of pride, one a bunch of flowers in his hat, and the other a string of beads to his waistbelt.

THE BRIGAND AND THE NUN.

UP there, on the mountain, in the garden of the convent, a certain pretty nun was weeping and sighing after the pleasures of this world.

“ Since my most tender years,” she lamented, “ I have been abandoned by my friends, and my parents have forgotten me, left alone in a desert !

“ Innocent, I was condemned and punished from the day of my birth, and alas ! I felt myself deprived for ever of the joys of existence.

“Passing my days in everlasting bitterness, mine eyes shed tears, and my soul complains, without ceasing, and, like the fruit that falls from the tree, I feel my life dying out in its flower !

“Ah ! could I but see at this very moment, the end of these hours of sorrow. May death, whom I wait for, come to me as a sweet consolation !”

“What daring wish hast thou expressed, O my dear sister ?” cried suddenly the brigand of the forest. “What ! thou whose eyes resemble the blackberries of our mountains, thou charming lily of the valley :

“Thou die, O sweet wonder of my country ! But dost thou not fear the Almighty ?

“Come, my dear and pretty sister, make the sign of the Cross three times, and address Him a short prayer to implore His pardon.

“Now, if thou wilt that thine eyes sparkle like a Paradise, full of divine joys ; if thou wilt that thy heart grow merry, and expand like a flower of the meadows.

“ Come with me into the depths of the green forest, come and listen to the *Doïna* of regret, when my brave companions descend into the valley by the secret by-ways.

“ Come, and watch the bird of prey, as it swoops down from the summit of the rocks upon the raven that croaks in the bottom of the precipice.

“ Come, and see above all, how the *çokoi* bends his body double, when he perceives me, and how he lays aside his arrogance, to fall humbly at my feet.

“ I have two steeds—two rapid dragons—the wind even cannot out-distance them. I have twelve companions in arms, and four pistols in my belt.

“ I carry on my breast a little crucifix that contains a splinter from the Sacred Cross, and other holy relics ; and in my bosom I carry a heart as burning as my burning lips !

“ I possess a precious stone that shines through the darkness, just as thine eyes when they contemplate happiness afar off. Abandon all—cell,

hood, coif, and rosary. And if thou wilt, thou shalt be joyous as the day of valour.

"Follow the brave man, who is inviting thee to partake of the pleasures of the world. And once his companion, thou wilt never again run the risk of taking the veil."

* * * * *


It is not said whether the nun really followed the brigand. But since that time, one hears neither sobs nor sighs, in the garden of the convent up there on the mountain.

FET-LOGOFET.*

"O FET-LOGOFET, with the rippling tresses of golden hair, stay here and rest thyself, for the black dragon is lying in wait for thee on the mountain."

"O charming young maiden, with the flowing locks and the rich girdle, I fear not the black dragon, for my arm is strong, and my club is heavy."

* A mythical hero, of the popular legends.



“Bold youth, with the gentle features and the eyes of fire, the dragon is terrible, and also without mercy—— Ah ! stay here for pity !”


“Beautiful child of the stars, with eyes dark as the fruit of the hawthorn, with brows white as the lily, all the dragons of the earth bow at my name !”

“Hero, young and famous, with haughty luminous forehead, the dragon strides over the highest mountains, and when he opens his jaws, with one he touches heaven, and with the other the earth !”

“Bird of the mountains, with the crown of flowers, when my wild steed rushes away, he leaps the seas, and flies among the clouds.”

“O Fet-Logofet, with the gleaming tresses, go not away from here ! Go not away, my courageous one, for I am dying for love of thee !”

“O charming young maiden, with the flowing locks of ebony and the virgin bosom, for thy love I will achieve fame, or die !”



"KRAIU-NOŮ."

(THE NEW MOON.)

At the hour of evening, when the bird flies to his nest, giving a plaintive note like a sigh; at the hour of twilight, when he folds his head under his wing, and goes softly to sleep among the leaves.

Zamfira, sad and pensive, came out of her tent, and fixed her eyes, dim with tears, upon the moon, who was shedding down her silver light on the forehead of the young maiden.

Since the charming child had smiled in this world, like the flower of the fields, the sun alone had pressed kisses upon her brilliant eyes and her virgin neck.

Her hair, black as a storm-cloud, fell around her beautiful body to her feet, and many times the fair maiden hid herself in her tresses for shelter against the sun. But when she carried upon her head a pitcher full of fresh water for her brothers, when her little mouth became dewy, and when the flower on her bosom was volup-

tuously lifted by the palpitating movement of her heart,

Oh ! then all the passers-by were seized with an ardent thirst. They begged her for a little water, and drank it slowly, looking at the young girl, and then they turned away, sighing with a vague desire.

She sang gaily as the lark, when he rises joyously into the summer sky, and at the sound of her voice the plains softly reverberated. One would have thought that he heard the flight of a mysterious spirit.

Often the old people, sitting in a circle around the fire in the tent, loved to listen to her songs. Often also, at night, they took counsel with the fates by the rays of the moon, predicting a brilliant destiny for the maiden.

But one evening, up there on the hill, an old sorceress consulted the forty-one grains of maize, and said suddenly, with trembling :

“O my daughter ! may God protect thee from the fair stranger with the caressing voice !”

From that time, Zamfira frequently saw a

shadow gliding among the clouds, and all the night she remained thoughtful, her heart a prey to vague desires, and her soul penetrated with soft emotions.

One night, as usual, she came out of her tent, and fixed her eyes, dim with tears, upon the moon, while she sang a melancholy song.

“O luminous Crescent! thou hast found me all in tears; thou hast found me full of sad thoughts, and with a gloomy face. My heart regrets—but what does it regret? I know not what it seeks for, I know not what it desires, my overburdened heart.

“For it hears during the night the quivering of wings, and then soft whispers that descend to it out of the high clouds.

“Then when the beams of day break over the horizon, my heart still dwells on the vanished dream of the night.

“O luminous Crescent! be welcome among us! But when thou goest away again leave not behind thee the bitter regret that now devours my soul!

Leave me with a necklace of shining ducats, and a snowy scarf, and little red slippers—

“Leave me, above all, happy, and fulfil my wishes before thou departest, O my beloved Crescent!”


Behold, a fair stranger passing through the sombre valley, heard the voice of the young maiden and came and stopped before her.

Gentle were the eyes, gentle was the face, and gentle also were the words of this stranger. The night soon passed away, and dawn found the fair child full of joy.

Three days later she wore on her neck a collar of shining ducats, and on her hair a snowy veil; but, alas! there were no more red flowers upon her cheeks; three days later the crescent faded out of the sky, and, like her, the fair stranger disappeared.

The poor child sat down by the roadside, and regretted him with many bitter tears.

Three days later, down there in the valley, only her grave was left, and long afterwards one heard



a plaintive voice pass by in the wind of night, repeating mournfully—

“Thou who goest gaily up to the hill to confide the secrets of thy soul to the crescent-moon, O poor young girl ! beware at the dusk of evening, beware of the beautiful stranger with the caressing voice !”

THE ENCHANTED SPRING.

IN the bottom of the valley two young girls were cleansing wool. They went on washing, and chattering, and laughing near to the spring.

“When the breeze of evening blows over the fields of rye, we shall thrice mutter the mysterious exorcism, and then we shall peer into the depths of the spring,

“And our prayer being granted, we shall see as in a mirror if our destinies will be fortunate, and if our lovers will be young and handsome.”

As soon as the breeze of evening blew over the fields of rye, the young girls thrice muttered their

exorcism, and peered down into the depths of the spring.

And there, upon the limpid surface of the water, they perceived, as in a dream of morning, two smiling, floating images.


These two images were fair; they had large eyes full of fire; they moved and swayed themselves gracefully, laughing at the young girls.

But suddenly two fresh reflections appeared upon the bosom of the water—as in a dream of morning, two reflections, fair to look upon.

However, these two last shadows were not as were the first—white as the lily and tender as the blue of heaven;

But were tanned by the wind, and had raven hair, and bushy eyebrows, and the eyes of the vulture with his daring glances.

“Behold, my sister! what a marvellous thing!” cried the two young girls thoughtlessly; “here are the faces of our lovers. Ah! how handsome they are to look upon! See, would not one say that these dumb shadows were trying



to kiss us! See, how they open their arms—
run away, my sister! save thyself!”

But they had not finished speaking before, upon their brows and upon their hair, some unknown lips were already pressing the softest kisses.

Since that time the two young girls go no more washing wool at the valley-spring, for now they pass their lives in the forests, and upon the great highways.

Now they know how one lets fly a ball at the enemy; and often they have seen how the Albanians run before the brigands.

For ever since upon their brows and their hair, they felt those softest kisses, the beloved children have followed into the forests,

Two young brigands, with bushy eye-brows, and faces tanned by the wind, and eyes like the vulture when he darts his daring glances.

THE PAUNAȘUL OF THE FOREST.*

(PAUNAȘUL CODRILOR.)


By hill and by mountain there went a maiden with a youth—a fair maiden with golden hair, and a youth with a high and bold expression, and a slender figure that would pass through a finger-ring.

He said again and again, “O my love, sing me thy song, that is as dear to me as mine own soul!”

“Love, I would sing it thee with gladness, but at my voice the glades would waken and re-echo, and suddenly there would appear before us the *Paunașul* of the forest, the bravest of the brave!”

“O my beloved, with the tresses of gold! be

* The Roumanian word “*Paunașul*” (peacock) signifies a young man, fair, proud, and mysterious, like the God Pan, the dweller of the woods. In a country where one meets with so many traces of Pagan times it is not too presumptuous to suppose that the recollection of this god may have survived in the mind of the people, and have become confused, after the elapsing of centuries, with the beautiful, vain bird of Juno. One sees figuring in the popular tales of the Roumanians the divinities Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus; and it is therefore almost obvious that the hero of the following ballad is intended to represent the Sylvan Deity.



of good courage ! Fear nothing for thyself while thou art with me, and fear nothing for me while I am in thy presence !”

The young girl began to sing. The glades awakened and re-echoed to her voice, and suddenly there appeared before them the *Paunaşul* of the forest, the bravest of the brave.

“Ho there ! my young fellow, my fine young fellow ! Thou must give me up thy beautiful sweetheart, if thou wilt save her life !”

“I will never give thee up my sweetheart while my head remains on my shoulders ! For from the day I took her I swore by her golden tresses never to abandon her, but to defend her against all the world !”

Now they catch each other by the waist-belt and begin to struggle. Sometimes they go swinging round, and sometimes one or the other is nearly thrown, but neither of them yet has gained the victory.

The youth grows feebler, and his belt loosens. Then the *Paunaşul* of the forest grips him hard, breaking his loins.

The young girl watches them wrestling, with sparkling eyes and palpitating bosom.

“O my sweetheart, my beautiful sweetheart, come and tighten my belt, for my strength is fading away! Alas! I lose my treasure.”*

“Sweetheart, no, I will do nothing, for this struggle is a fair one. And whomever of you is the winner, him will I take for a husband!”

At these words the two rivals begin again, closing with greater fury, grasping each other with increased force, and wrestling with redoubled vigour.

At last one of them remains the winner; the other falls beaten at his feet. Which of them is victorious, and carries away the maiden? It is the *Paunaşul* of the forest, the bravest of the brave.

And who has fallen in the contest, and lies alone and abandoned? It is the youth with the slender figure, who is expiring in the solitude of the woods.

* Treasure here means strength. A popular proverb says, “*Putere avere*” (to be able, is to have).

A GIPSY SONG.

THE wind whistles over the heath ;
The moon dances upon the waves ;
The gipsy lights up his fire in the gloom of the
wood,

Yuchza, Yuchza.

Free is the bird in the air ;
Free is the fish in the river ;
Free is the deer in the forest ;
Freer the gipsy wherever he wanders,

Yuchza, Yuchza.

“ Maid, wilt thou live in my dwelling ?
I will give thee garments of sable,
And golden coins for a necklace.”

“ The untamed horse leaves not the prairie for a
glittering harness ;
The eagle leaves not the crags of the mountain
for the gold bars of a cage ;
The daughter of Roma leaves not the meadow
and leafy forest

For zibeline garments and a necklace of shining
ducats."

"Maid, wilt thou live in my dwelling?
I will give thee both diamonds and pearls,
I will give thee a couch of purple,
I will give thee a royal palace."

"My pearls are my white teeth;
My diamonds are my black eyes, that glance like
the lightning;
My couch is the soft green earth;
My palace the wide, free world,
Yuchza, Yuchza."

Free is the bird in the air;
Free is the fish in the river;
Free is the deer in the forest;
Freer the gipsy wherever he wanders,
Yuchza, Yuchza.

THE END.

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